

2002

# Town of Billerica, Massachusetts Master Plan

Center for Economic Development

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*Town of Billerica, Massachusetts*  
**MASTER PLAN**  
*October 2002*

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*The Historic Stoker Home on Concord Road with the new Wyndham Hotel in the background.*



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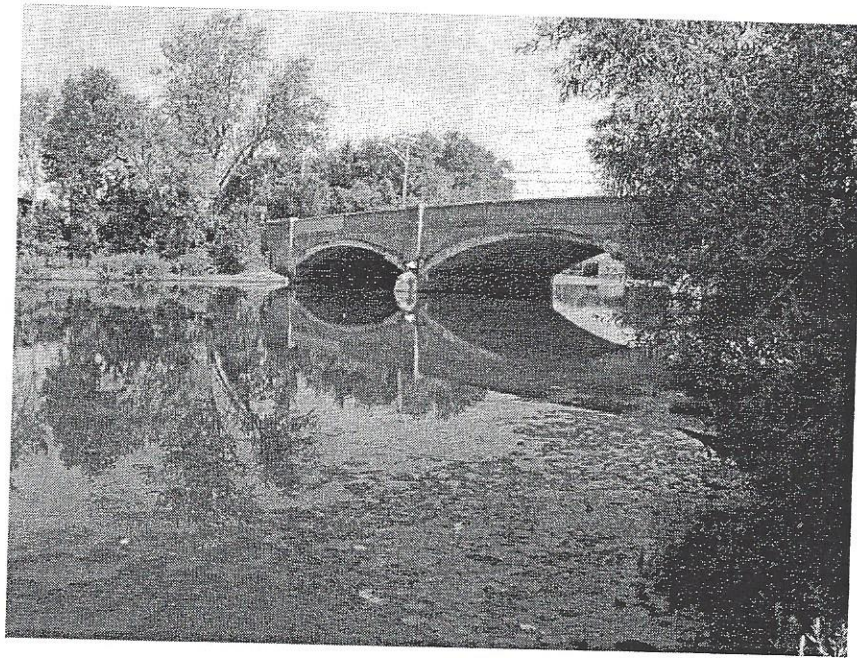


## Chapter One: Introduction

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*"The shores are still uninhabited, - the road being remote, - especially on the west side, and in the neighborhood of Middle Bridge we find ourselves off the middle of Billerica, the quiet town, and see its rural spire rising above the trees."*

- *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau, on the Concord River July 22, 1859*



Billerica is a community rich in history and burgeoning with change. We come from colonial, agrarian roots, participated in the industrial revolution and enjoyed our day as a vacation destination. Billerica changed as the post war economy changed and became a haven for those, many from the city, seeking a close-knit community to raise families. We are now at the forefront of a high technology economy that has brought with it jobs, hotels and more change. As a community we struggle with our desire to preserve our historical character as a rural community and our realization that economic development is progress and must be encouraged.

The Long Range Master Planning Committee was established by the Board of Selectmen to seek to strike the proper balance between these sometimes competing interests. Twice Town Meeting has supported funding to support the Committee's work. The Committee was charged with developing a master plan for the community that would take a long-range view of many important areas of concern. The Committee has reviewed (with the assistance of many others) land use, housing, school needs, economic development, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, transportation, services and facilities.

The Committee believes that the best way to develop a master plan is through diverse community involvement and substantial public input. In our view the Master Plan that follows reflects this belief. The Plan is the result of a collaborative effort involving hundreds of citizens who participated in our planning charrette, mailed in surveys, served on one of our subcommittees or simply passed along comments to one of our members. We estimate that the compilation of the Master Plan took over three thousand volunteer hours from committee and subcommittee members as well as from citizens who took time to provide input.







## ***The Committee***

In order to obtain input from a variety of diverse constituencies, members were appointed to the Long Range Master Planning Committee from a broad array of interested groups. The Committee make-up is as follows:

### **Appointing Authority**

Board of Selectmen  
School Committee

Planning Board  
Board of Appeal  
Conservation Commission  
Billerica Plan  
Chamber of Commerce  
Moderator  
Finance Committee  
Board of Health  
Recreation Commission  
Residents (Appointed by Selectmen)  
Director of Planning

### **Committee Members**

Ellen Rawlings, Peter Coppinger  
Robert Keough  
Maureen Collins-Rea, Francis Fraine (Alternates)  
Sal Pasciuto, Jr., Lawrence Bavis (past member)  
Joseph Shaw  
Ilana Freedman  
Jeanne Osborn, Malcolm McDowell (past member)  
Stephen Dresser  
John Glennon  
Peter Greeley  
Robert Reader  
Paul Shibles, Peggy Hannon-Rizza  
Donna Doucette, Michael Tammaro, Ted Clark  
Peter Kennedy

## ***Our Work***

In October 2000 and 2001, Town Meeting approved funding to allow the Committee to hire experts to assist the Committee. The Committee hired Professor John Mullin of the University of Massachusetts and Professor Zenia Kotval of Michigan State University, both of Mullin Associates Incorporated. Dr. Mullin and Dr. Kotval spent many hours assisting the Committee and imparting their combined considerable experience in municipal planning. The Committee is most appreciative of their creative thinking, guidance and wisdom. We also immensely enjoyed their energetic and enthusiastic personalities.

The Master Plan is the vision of the Committee guided by our experiences and substantial community input. Our work was in two phases. The first phase was to find out who we were as a community and what concerned us. The three initial master plan steps were the following: (1) the State of the Town Report; (2) the Town Survey; and (3) the Planning Charrette. The second phase involved subcommittee work in the various plan elements and the drafting of the actual Master Plan based on the information learned in phase one and thereafter.

## ***State of the Town Report***

The first step in our planning process was to find out where we currently stand as a community from a review of available information. We developed a State of the Town Report that includes data on demographics, schools, housing, utilities and infrastructure, economic profile, fiscal climate, tax structure and other quality of life indicators. We also reviewed other available information, including data recently provided by the State's Build-out Analysis.

## ***Town Survey***

We then developed a statistically significant town wide survey to gauge community input on many important areas of concern. The survey was mailed in late May/early June 2001 to all Billerica households with the Recreation Department brochure. Responses were analyzed and a report for future action generated.

## ***Planning Charrette***

*Billerica Faces the Future*, which was held in the Maurice A. Buck Memorial Auditorium at the Billerica Town Hall on Saturday, May 5, 2001, exceeded all of our expectations. The purpose of the charrette (or workshop) was to generate intensive small group discussions and spirited collaboration to develop a vision and action agenda for our Town. Approximately 100 people attended a very lively (and fun) session with serious discussion about who we are and want to become.

## ***Master Plan***

What follows is our Master Plan. Although it contains many very specific recommendations in a number of areas, it is important to remember that the recommendations are just that – recommendations – intended to foster debate on important topics that affect our Town's future. We do not expect that everyone will agree with every recommendation and you do not need to agree with every specific proposal to endorse the Master Plan. In fact, the Committee itself vigorously debated many items, yet endorses the Master Plan as a guide to long term planning on key issues that we expect to debate at Town Meeting in the future.

As you will see, one of the key recommendations of the Committee is an implementation program, which would define and schedule specific Town actions necessary to achieve the objectives of each element of the Master Plan. A Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee would be established to oversee this program and to make periodic reports to Town Meeting.

## ***Acknowledgements***

In addition to Professors Mullin and Kotval, the Committee wishes to acknowledge the assistance of many, including of course the Board of Selectmen (James O'Donnell, Ellen Rawlings, Michael Rosa, Robert Correnti and Francis Fraine), Town Meeting, and our subcommittee members (listed below), as well as the countless number of citizens who participated in our charrette or took the time to fill out surveys or pass along comments. The Committee also wishes to acknowledge the assistance and support of Town Manager Richard Montuori, Director of Planning Peter Kennedy and the many Boards, Commissions, Committees and Town Department heads and employees who provided invaluable insight and constructive criticism. The Committee particularly wishes to acknowledge the superior work of the Open Space and Recreation Committee, whose product we relied on for that element of our Master Plan. Special thanks also go to Jeanne LeGallo, who kept us organized, to photographer extraordinaire Michael Rizza, to the Middlesex Community College Foundation, Inc., who restored the Stoker House and thus provided inspiration for our cover, and to the Museum Committee who graciously permitted us to use several of their valuable historic photographs in our plan.

We appreciate your interest in our work and would welcome comments on how to improve our Master Plan.

Sincerely,

*Peter Coppinger, Chairman*



## Subcommittees:

Land Use	Housing	Economic Development
Steve Dresser*	Peter Coppinger*	Ellen Rawlings*
Ilana Freedman*	Donna Doucette*	Peter Greeley*
Al Ramos	Stephen Hart	Rich Scanlon
Marti Mahoney	Maryann Ardell	John Lynch
Diane Dexter	Jeanne Barron	Sal Pascicutto
Marie Vecchiarello	Vivian Chaput	Joan Parcewski
Peter Kennedy	Rev. Dr. Dennis Bailey	Jim Marshall
	Joe Shaw	Kathy Matos
	Chet Sewell	
	Carol Ford	

Natural & Cultural Resources	Transportation, Services & Facilities	Education & Schools
Paul Shibles*	Dave Gagliardi*	John Glennon*
Peggy Hannon-Rizza*	Mary McBride*	Robert Keough*
Philip Newfell	Barbara Flaherty	Maureen Collins-Rea
Barbara Morrissey	John Ciancio	Vincent Amato
Andy Bowen	John Sanchez	Walter Bradbury
Shayne Reardon	Edward Bunker	Karen Ernst
Jeanette Davis		Ted Clark
Kevin Gilligan		John Rice
Jeanne Osborn		Frank McDewell
		Dr. Robert Calabrese
		Bernie Hoar
		James O'Donnell

\* Co Chair

## *Chapter Two: Executive Summary*

This Master Plan is designed to provide a strategy for future sustainability and development in the Town of Billerica. The seven areas of concern highlighted in this Plan are:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Education and Schools
- Transportation, Facilities and Services
- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Open Space and Recreation

The areas of concern and the specific goals developed for those topics are highlighted below.

### *Land Use*

An important concern of the people of Billerica is the preservation of the remaining open space in the Town. By understanding the potential of a planned program of land use, the existing open space within the Town can be used to enhance the quality of life for Billerica residents. It is believed that a well-planned growth strategy will allow the preservation of open space side by side with the continued development of the Town. The following five goals were developed to appropriately plan for future land uses in Billerica:

1. Optimize existing protected open space with parks and river walks for community use.
2. Developing solutions for increasing the stock of affordable housing.
3. Provide incentives for planned development in appropriate areas.
4. Encourage industrial development that will reduce impact on existing neighborhoods.
5. Separating areas of commercial development

Eleven objectives and numerous action items to plan for land uses in Billerica were developed from these goals.

### *Housing*

The most critical housing issue facing the Town of Billerica is the shortage of affordable housing. Billerica currently has 13,055 year round housing units of which only 216 (1.6%) are considered affordable, both as defined by the state and generally as to the ability to obtain housing: a shortfall of 1,090 units. The Town is looking to increase that percentage and distribute the affordable housing evenly throughout the Town with a mixture of first time homeowners, starter apartments, over 55 housing and assisted living units. The following five goals were developed to plan for future housing development in the Town:

1. The Town should review and update (as needed) the housing goals on a regular basis
2. Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (Including all socio-economic groups)
3. Protect the residential living environment of existing and proposed residential areas
4. Locate housing of varying densities on sites, which are appropriate for such densities
5. Provide affordable housing opportunities at locations that are compatible with surrounding land use and are conducive to the well-being of the Town residents

Twenty-two objectives and numerous action items to plan for the future of residential development in Billerica were developed to further these goals.



## ***Economic Development***

The Town of Billerica is a regional employment center within a suburban community. Commerce and industry account for nearly 24% of the assessed value of the community. In pursuit of a balance between economic vitality and the quality of life, the following goals were developed:

1. The Town of Billerica should continue to attract new business to maintain a stable tax base. The diversity of the businesses is key to surviving fluctuations in the economy. Targeted new businesses should be in keeping with the character of the Town.
2. The Town of Billerica must work with the existing business community to maintain the Town's economic vitality. Established businesses should be encouraged to grow in Billerica, creating jobs and capital investment for the local community and for the region. Strong public-private partnerships are essential to economic stability.
3. The Town of Billerica's economic development policy should seek to create and retain good jobs for Billerica residents, and to promote job opportunities in local businesses to the residents.
4. Recognizing that the retail shops help to define the character of the community, the Town of Billerica should encourage the growth of small shops within existing retail space, rather than focusing on the large users. Shops, and the goods and services they render, should be in keeping with the character of the Town.

Eleven objectives and a wide variety of action items in support of these goals were developed to prepare the community for future economic development needs.

## ***Education and Schools***

The most critical school issue facing the Town of Billerica is space for the future. As new housing developments turn up in Town, an increase in student population will most likely follow. In order to provide a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment in which students become critical and creative learners and independent problem solvers, the following four goals were developed:

1. Ensure comprehensive educational offerings in the community, including but not limited to vocational education and comprehensive high school. The goal is to maintain and improve the current educational system and ensure that it remains a staple of the quality of life in Billerica.
2. Ensure adequate classroom space and facilities according to Massachusetts's school standards to support projected student population from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
3. Preservation of land in the Community for school and recreational purposes.
4. The Long Range Master Planning Committee in coordination with the School Committee and Billerica School Administration will be charged with the periodic oversight of the goals set forth.

Eight objectives and numerous action items were developed in pursuit of these goals to plan for the future of education and the school system in Billerica.

### ***Transportation, Facilities and Services***

Billerica has 216 miles of roads. Of that total, 166 miles or 77% of the roads are accepted and sidewalks are not commonplace. The Town Street Plan will be updated soon and will include expanded construction of sidewalks, especially near schools, recreational facilities, and major roads. In order to plan for future needs related to circulation, facilities and services, the following goals were developed:

1. Improve adherence to speed limits and regard for traffic lights, especially for truck traffic. Achieve a compromise between safety and convenience while maintaining the Town's rural character.
2. Improve road quality and increase the number of sidewalks on main roads and near schools.
3. Ensure that drainage continues to be a focal point of the DPW.
4. Bring the Water Treatment Plant on line in compliance with all new DEP standards.

Eight objectives and associated action items were developed to accomplish these goals.

### ***Natural and Cultural Resources***

In 2005, Billerica will celebrate its 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a municipality of the Commonwealth. More than a dozen generations of Billericans have taken part in the formation of our character as a rural, industrial, and suburban community. Billerica residents enter the new millennium as trustees of a rich and varied heritage that encompasses all four centuries of American history. In order to plan for the future needs of the natural and cultural resources of Billerica, the following three goals were developed:

1. Foster local environmental, historical and cultural literacy in Billerica
2. Preserve, restore and protect our town's historical, cultural and natural resources
3. Identify, recognize and promote Billerica's unique character

Ten objectives and numerous action items were developed to further these goals and protect Billerica's natural and cultural resources.

### ***Open Space and Recreation***

The Town of Billerica currently has over 400 acres of state forest and over 800 acres of municipal protected open space. Unprotected properties separate many of these open space parcels. This lack of linkages in addition to the lack of public awareness of the Town's open space resources, and lack of public access to the Concord River and other water resources are the main issues related to open space that Billerica faces. To provide for future needs related to open space and recreation in the Town, the following goals were developed:

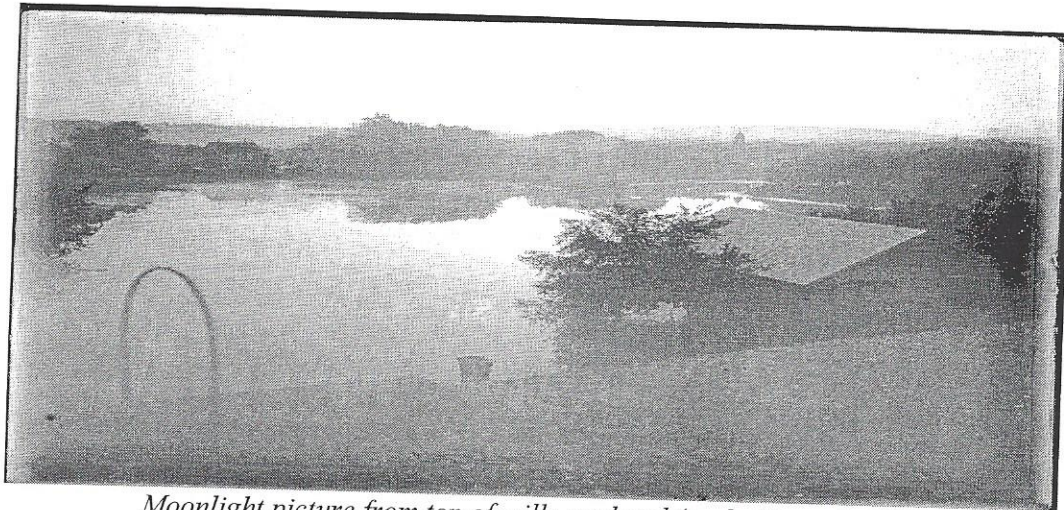
1. Environmentally healthy water and wetland resources.
2. Preservation of key open space, cultural and historic resources
3. Improved public awareness and access to open space and recreation land
4. Land management and maintenance systems for open space and recreation facilities
5. Greenways for recreational trails and habitat networks, creating local and regional links
6. Balanced uses of open space to include conservation, passive recreation, and active recreation

Eleven objectives and a variety of action items were developed in pursuit of these goals.



## Chapter Three: Land Use

Currently the Town of Billerica covers a total area of 26.39 square miles, 2% of which is water and another 3.6% is wetlands. Residential dwellings make up 42% of the land use, with the majority of homes being located within residential subdivisions, although significant older neighborhoods exist in the town center, North Billerica, Pinehurst, and Nuttings Lake. The remainder of the town is commercial/industrial (8%), roads (2.4%), recreation (1.5%), agriculture (2%), forest land (32% or 5,500 acres) and other forms of open space (4.7%). There are 1,500 acres of protected open space in Billerica.



*Moonlight picture from top of mills, undated (probably early 1900s)*

The Town is far below the state requirements for affordable housing stock. This creates a problem for the Town with regards to fulfilling state mandated regulations. Additionally, this situation also impacts town residents who either are older and wish to down size their living quarters without leaving town, or younger adults who wish to remain in the town in which they grew up.

### *Issues and Concerns*

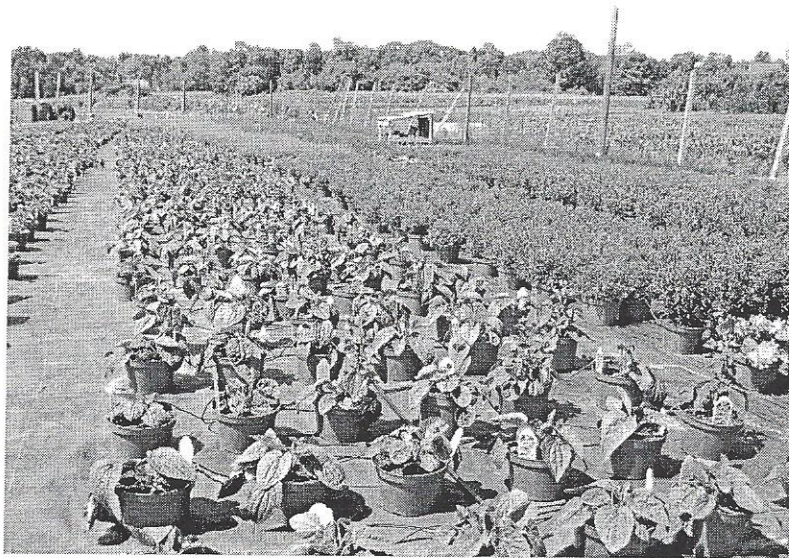
At the Planning Charrette held by Mullin Associates, Inc. on May 5, 2001, the participants raised the following land use issues:

- Some of the strengths of the Town of Billerica are the open space and economic growth.
- Some of the weaknesses of the Town of Billerica are that there is not enough open space; the Town needs to preserve its open space; the lack of public green space; too much growth; and increasing sprawl.
- There are opportunities to control growth.
- Some of the threats to the Town are that growth is not being managed and the amount of open space is shrinking.
- Preliminary actions that were suggested by participants included slowing down the rate of development, controlling development by prioritizing parcels of land and funding the land bank, and improving regulations so that residential and industrial sectors do not conflict so much.
- A critical first step that was suggested by participants was to manage growth.

The Charrette was followed by a Community Survey that was conducted in September 2001. The survey included questions about what was important for the Town to accomplish from the perspective of the residents. According to the Community Survey Summary Report by the Billerica Long Range Master Planning

Committee, respondents indicated that it was important for the Town of Billerica to preserve open space, to preserve the rural elements of the town, to extend the sewer lines, and to limit the number of new homes built annually. Two items viewed as being only slightly important were to increase residential development and to increase commercial development.

Building upon the information learned from the Charrette and the Survey results, the Land Use Sub-Committee determined that the planned use of land zoned for various uses is important for the measured growth of the Town in the future. In the past, Billerica has been subject to significant growth and development, which has been, at best, patchwork, during a period in which the Town grew rapidly from 10,000 residents in 1950 to its present population of nearly 40,000. During this period, the Town changed its nature from rural to suburban with a significant industrial component.



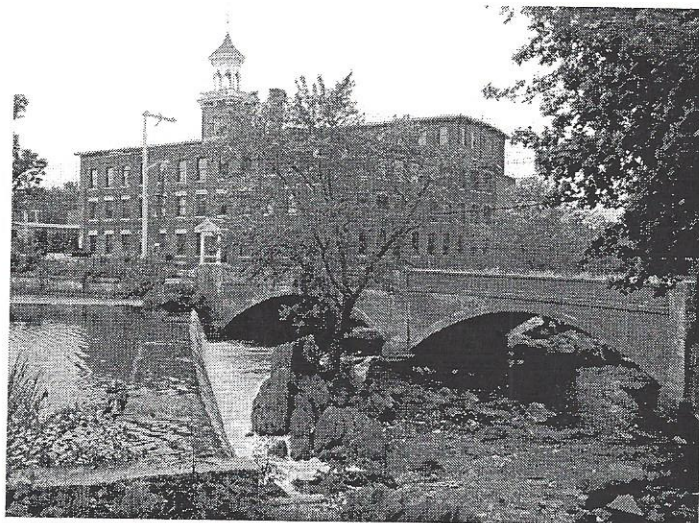


## ***Goals and Objectives***

In the Charrette and subsequent town survey, which were held in the early stages of the Master Planning program, it was found that the single most important concern of the people of Billerica was the preservation of remaining open space. It is hoped that by understanding the potential of a planned program of land use, the existing open space within the town can be used to enhance the quality of life for Billerica residents. It is believed that a well-planned growth strategy will allow the preservation of open space side by side with the continued development of the Town. Based on the issues listed above, the Land Use Sub-Committee developed the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Optimize existing protected open space with parks and river walks for community use.

- Objective A: Utilize creative methods for enabling greater access and desirability of existing parks and protected open space.
- Objective B: Develop trails and river walks for passive recreation.
- Objective C: Create a greater awareness of the available open space in the town and its accessibility.
- Objective D: Provide incentives to create and preserve open space in working partnership with developers, industry, and town projects.



Goal 2: Developing solutions for increasing the stock of affordable housing.

- Objective A: Promote zoning that allows creative solutions to the discrepancies between upscale development and affordable housing.
- Objective B: Promote zoning that allows creative opportunities to combine affordable housing and open space.
- Objective C: Promote mixed-use zoning (where feasible) that allows the use of available land for multi-purposes in order to improve quality of life while providing affordable housing and creating jobs.
- Objective D: Promote the development of a wide range of housing types and opportunities, including housing for elderly, empty nesters, young families, special needs, and assisted living.

Goal 3: Provide incentives for planned development in appropriate areas.

Objective: Provide incentives such as infrastructure and tax-based opportunities to encourage responsible development of both standard and affordable housing throughout the Town..

Goal 4: Encourage industrial development that will reduce impact on existing neighborhoods.

Objective: Modify industrial zones to limit the impact of industrial use on existing residential neighborhoods.

Goal 5: Separating areas of commercial development

Objective: Rezone the Route 3A corridor (Boston Road) in order to allow development of special residential construction (multi-family, townhouses, special use, assisted living, etc.) to separate commercial focal points and limit them to clearly defined areas while protecting the historical character.

## *Implementation Strategies*

### **GOAL 1: Optimize existing protected open space with parks and river walks for community use**

#### **OBJECTIVE A:**

**Utilize creative methods for enabling greater access and desirability of existing parks and protected open space**

#### ***Discussion:***

Protected open space is a precious commodity. Large investments of time and money are put towards the purchase, protection, and maintenance of this open space. To maximize the returns on their investments, communities should strive to optimize the use of their protected open space by making improvements in accessibility and by promoting the desirability of this natural resource.

#### ***Action Needed:***

- Provide Parking Areas and increase the usability of and create trail systems.
- Obtain the latest copy of the Open Space and Recreation Plan to:
  - Obtain an inventory of existing parks and protected open space (e.g., name, size, location, ownership, management entity, level of protection, etc.)
  - Locate the parks and open space on a map
  - Determine the special qualities of the different properties and the appropriate uses that should be encouraged on them
  - Gather information about the accessibility of these properties
  - Obtain the Five-Year Action Plan
- Take a group tour of the various parks and protected open spaces to become familiar with the properties to discuss their attributes and their challenges
- Speak with the owners and the management entities of the parks and protected open space to determine what types of uses would be allowed and encouraged at the various properties and ways in which access to the properties could be improved
- Speak with the Town Manager, the Recreation Department and the Public Works Department to determine what would be appropriate uses of the properties in their opinion and ways in which access to the properties could be improved
- Gather all the existing and past marketing information for the properties (maps, brochures, etc.) and determine the effectiveness of each type of information material
- Gather marketing information for protected open space from other localities, the state, the National Park Service and other similar entities for comparison purposes
- Conduct research on the Internet to determine what other localities in the country and in the world offer as marketing material for their parks and protected open space
- Develop a plan for implementation of the opportunities to improve access to the properties as well as the development of marketing materials in conjunction with the Town Manager, the Recreation Department, and the Public Works Department
- Based on comparisons and research, develop marketing materials either in-house or with assistance from local businesses
- Work with the Town Manager, the Recreation Department, the Public Works Department and possibly volunteers to improve access to these properties based on the above plan



***Expected Results:***

A plan for improving access to and publicity of the various parks and protected open spaces in Town will be developed and implemented. Marketing materials will be developed and distributed throughout the Town. Accessibility to the parks and protected open spaces will be improved through a coordinated effort between the Town Manager, the Recreation Department, the Public Works Department and volunteers.

***Responsibility:***

Land Use Subcommittee, Recreation Department, Public Works Department

***Timing:***

2002 - Development of Implementation Plan

2002-2003 - Develop Marketing Materials

2003 - Begin to improve accessibility to parks and protected open spaces

***Resources:***

Land Use Subcommittee, NMCOG, Recreation Department, Public Works Department, Town Manager, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Volunteers, Marketing materials from other localities

**GOAL 1: Optimize existing protected open space with parks and river walks for community use**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Develop trails and river walks for passive recreation**

***Discussion:***

Passive recreational activities, such as walking, are very popular among people of all ages. Trails and river walks provide people with opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing. The Town should make every effort to partner with local groups and volunteers to develop trails and walking paths in parks and along waterways.

***Action Needed:***

- Coordinate the development of trails and river walks with the actions in the Five Year Action Plan of the Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Develop a list of sites for trail and river walk development with assistance from the property owners, the management entities, the Town Manager, the Recreation Department, the Public Works Department, and local trails groups
- Tour the sites on the list to determine the attributes of each site and to rank the sites as to the ease of development of a trail or river walk
- Meet with the property owners, the management entities, the Town Manager, the Recreation Department, the Public Works Department, local trails groups, and local Boards and Commissions to determine what types of trails and river walks can be developed on these sites (with or without assistance from the Town) and what permits may be needed to develop the trails and river walks
- Develop a plan for the new trails and river walks specifying the sites, description of trail work, anticipated work schedule, costs, and participants with possible assistance from the property owners, the management entities, the Recreation Department, the Public Works Department, local and national trails groups, and local volunteers (Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, etc.)
- Obtain any appropriate permits for the development of trails and river walks

***Expected Results:***

A list of new trails and river walks will be developed and the necessary permits for the trail work will be obtained. Trails and river walks will be developed with assistance from and in conjunction with the property owners, the management entities, the Recreation Department, the Public Works Department, local and national trails groups, and local volunteers.

***Responsibility:***

The Land Use Subcommittee, the Recreation Department, the Public Works Department

***Timing:***

2002 - Develop list of sites for potential trails and river walks.

2003 - Develop a plan for the specifics of the trails and river walks and obtain necessary permits from the Town.

2003-2004 - Begin to develop trails and river walks.

***Resources:***

Town Manager, the Recreation Department, the Public Works Department, School Department, NMCOG, the property owners, the management entities, local trails groups, Boy Scout troops, Girl Scout troops, and assorted volunteers.

**GOAL 1: Optimize existing protected open space with parks and river walks for community use**

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Create a greater awareness of the available open space in the Town and its accessibility**

***Discussion:***

Oftentimes, citizens do not know the full extent of a municipality's efforts to protect land and make it accessible to the general public. In order to make the community aware of the Town's extensive network of open space, the Town of Billerica should publicize its hard work on behalf of open space protection through marketing materials and the local media. This increased attention to the subject of public open space may persuade people to go and investigate firsthand this precious natural resource in their own community.

***Action Needed:***

- Gather all the existing and past marketing information for the available open space (maps, brochures, etc.) and determine the effectiveness of each type of information material
- Gather marketing information for protected open space from other localities, the state, the National Park Service and other similar entities for comparison purposes
- Conduct research on the Internet to determine what other localities in the country and in the world offer as marketing material for their open space
- Based on local resources, develop a strategy for the publicity of the open space
- Based on comparisons and research, develop marketing materials in conjunction with the Town Manager either in-house or with assistance from local businesses
- Publicize open space and related information materials throughout the Town (e.g., Town Hall, local cable shows, Town homepage, local newspapers, local Board and Commissions, etc.)
- Organize tours of the open space for the general public possibly through the local trails groups, the Recreation Department, the School Department, and local volunteers (including Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts)

***Expected Results:***

A strategy for publicizing the existing open space will be developed and implemented. Potential opportunities for publicity include maps, pamphlets, local cable shows, Internet, local newspapers, and tours.

***Responsibility:***

The Land Use Subcommittee, Recreation Department

***Timing:***

2002 - 2003 - Develop marketing materials

2003 - Begin to publicize the open space through a variety of methods

***Resources:***

The Land Use Subcommittee, the Town Manager, the Recreation Department, NMCOG, the management entities of the open space, the School Department, local cable channel, Town homepage, local volunteers (including Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts).



**GOAL 1: Optimize existing protected open space with parks and river walks for community use**

**OBJECTIVE D:**

**Provide incentives to create and preserve open space in working partnership with developers, industry, and Town projects**

**Discussion:**

The Town should always be aware of creative opportunities to protect open space. Since funding to purchase and protect open space is not always plentiful, the Town should explore ways in which it can encourage other entities to work together to create and preserve open space.

**Action Needed:**

- Determine the current opportunities for developers, industry and the Town to create and preserve open space
- Develop a list of past donations of open space as part of development projects
- Review the present requirements for the creation and preservation of open space in development projects in the local zoning bylaws and the subdivision control regulations
- Interview a few local developers to determine what incentives would entice them to donate or protect open space as part of a new development project
- Consult with the Department of Housing and Community Development and Town Counsel to determine the types of legal incentives that exist (cluster development, Planned Unit Development, etc.)
- Develop recommendations for zoning bylaw changes to encourage the creation and preservation of open space

**Expected Results:**

The Town will learn the extent to which it can provide incentives for developers and industry to protect open space.

**Responsibility:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning

**Timing:**

2002-2003

**Resources:**

Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Land Use Subcommittee

**GOAL 2: Developing solutions for increasing the stock of affordable housing**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Promote zoning that generates effective solutions, which would make upscale and affordable housing more compatible**

***Discussion:***

While there will always be discrepancies between upscale housing and affordable housing, there are ways to diminish the inconsistencies between these two types of housing development. Zoning is a tool that can assist a town in this task. Creative zoning techniques exist throughout the Commonwealth and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development can be of great assistance to the Town in this endeavor.

***Action Needed:***

- The Planning Board and Director of Planning should contact the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws that provide creative solutions to the discrepancies between upscale development and affordable housing
- The Planning Board and Planning Board and Director of Planning should conduct some Internet research on the various zoning techniques involving creative solutions to the discrepancies between upscale development and affordable housing
- The Planning Board and Director of Planning and the Town should contact some local developers to determine what zoning techniques would encourage them to produce development plans that involve creative solutions to the discrepancies between upscale development and affordable housing
- The Planning Board and Director of Planning should draft a compilation of all the zoning techniques that were gathered from DHCD, the Internet, and local developers for review by the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen

***Expected Results:***

A variety of zoning bylaws will be compiled and provided to the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen for their review. The zoning bylaws that seem to be the most appropriate for the Town will be brought before the community for their input and approval.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003-2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, NMCOG, Legal Counsel, local developers, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Land Use Subcommittee

**GOAL 2: Developing solutions for increasing the stock of affordable housing**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Promote zoning that allows creative opportunities to combine affordable housing and open space**

***Discussion:***

At this time, the Town of Billerica would like to promote innovative residential zoning regulations that provide future residents of the Town with quality affordable housing and usable, protected open space. In order to develop such regulations, the Town should conduct some research to determine how other communities within the state have approached this type of situation.

***Action Needed:***

- The Town should determine what types of developments involving affordable housing and open space it wants to encourage through zoning
- The Planning Board and Director of Planning should contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws that involve innovative techniques that involve affordable housing and protected open space
- The Planning Board and Planning Board and Director of Planning should conduct some Internet research on the various zoning techniques involving affordable housing and open space
- The Planning Board and Director of Planning and the Town should contact some local developers to determine what zoning techniques would encourage them to produce development plans that involve affordable housing and open space
- The Planning Board and Director of Planning should draft a compilation of all the zoning techniques that were gathered from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the Internet, and local developers for review by the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen

***Expected Results:***

A variety of zoning bylaws will be compiled and provided to the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen for their review. The zoning bylaws that seem to be the most appropriate for the Town will be brought before the community for their input and approval.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003-2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Legal Counsel, local developers, NMCOG, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Land Use Subcommittee



**GOAL 2: Developing solutions for increasing the stock of affordable housing**

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Promote mixed-use zoning (where feasible) that allows the use of available land for multi-purposes in order to improve quality of life while providing affordable housing and creating jobs**

***Discussion:***

In order to plan for the future, the Town should make every effort to provide for quality housing and jobs. There will always be a need to house people who work in and near Billerica. Mixed-use zoning is a creative solution that can support the development of housing (a portion of which can be affordable) and business development.

***Action Needed:***

- Determine what specific types of residential and business uses the Town would like to allow in a mixed use zoning district
- Determine potential locations for a mixed-use zoning district
- Consult with the Planning Board and Director of Planning, Town Counsel and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development to obtain the various types of mixed use zoning district regulations that are currently in place in Massachusetts
- Draft regulations for a mixed use zoning district in conjunction with Town Counsel based on the various types of mixed use zoning district regulations that are currently in place in Massachusetts
- Educate the general public on the benefits of mixed-use zoning.

***Expected Results:***

A variety of zoning bylaws will be compiled and provided to the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen for their review. The zoning bylaws that seem to be the most appropriate for the Town will be brought before the community for their input and approval.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003-2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, NMCOG, Legal Counsel, local developers, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Land Use Subcommittee

**GOAL 2: Developing solutions for increasing the stock of affordable housing**

**OBJECTIVE D:**

**Promote the development of a wide range of housing types and opportunities, including housing for elderly, empty nesters, young families, people with special needs, and assisted living**

***Discussion:***

In order to attract future residents of all types, the Town should ensure the development of a variety of housing types now. There are many ways to promote housing for a wide range of family types (i.e., expedited permitting processes, zoning changes, etc.). The Town should explore the many options to promote the development of a variety of housing types and implement the ones that are appropriate for Billerica.

***Action Needed:***

- Determine what specific types of housing development (infill, apartment complexes, Downtown apartments, small houses, condominiums, townhouses, etc.) are best suited for elderly, empty nesters, young families, people with special needs, and assisted living
- Determine in which zoning districts housing for the elderly, empty nesters, young families, people with special needs, and assisted living is currently allowed and where it should be allowed
- Review the zoning bylaws and the permitting process for these types of housing for opportunities to remove barriers or simplify the processes
- Contact a few local developers to get their opinion on ways to promote this type of housing
- If the zoning bylaws do not support these types of housing, consult with Town Counsel and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development to obtain the various types of zoning regulations that do support these types of housing

***Expected Results:***

If appropriate, a simplified permitting process and/or zoning bylaws that encourage the development of a wide range of housing types and opportunities, including housing for elderly, empty nesters, young families, people with special needs, and assisted living, will be established in Billerica.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003-2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Land Use Subcommittee



**GOAL 3: Provide incentives for planned development in appropriate areas**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Provide incentives such as infrastructure and tax-based opportunities to encourage responsible development of both standard and affordable housing throughout the Town**

***Discussion:***

In order to provide quality housing for future residents, the Town of Billerica should explore the concept of providing incentives to developers of standard and affordable housing. Incentives come in many forms. The Town should explore the many types of incentives, including those that relate to infrastructure and taxes, and implement the ones that are appropriate for Billerica.

***Action Needed:***

- Decide upon the locations where the standard and affordable housing should be developed
- Determine what types of housing are allowed in these locations by the current zoning bylaw
- Determine the proximity of existing infrastructure to these locations
- Determine the infrastructure requirements for the housing at these locations
- With Legal Counsel, explore the different types of incentives that the Town can offer to encourage responsible development of both standard and affordable housing
- Contact the State or conduct research on the Internet for tax incentive programs
- Explore the tax ramifications to the Town if tax incentives are given to encourage this type of housing
- Review current zoning bylaw for opportunities for offering incentives
- Educate the general public on the benefits of planned developments

***Expected Results:***

After conducting research into the various types of incentives, the Town will decide whether or not to offer incentives for the responsible development of standard and affordable housing. If incentives are to be offered, the Planning Board and Director of Planning and Town Counsel will draft applications, policies or zoning changes to be reviewed and approved by the Town.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003-2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Legal Counsel, NMCOC, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Public Works, Finance Department/Tax Collector, Assessors Department

**GOAL 4: Encourage industrial development that will reduce impact on existing neighborhoods**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Modify industrial zones to limit the impact of industrial use on existing residential neighborhoods**

***Discussion:***

As the business community grows in Billerica, residents should not be punished by the many potential negative effects of this growth, such as an increase in truck traffic on neighborhood streets. Truck traffic is more appropriate for both the businesses and residents when it occurs near roads that were designed for it, e.g., highways. Industrial zones within close proximity to the highways are an excellent way to mitigate the potential negative effects of truck traffic.

***Action Needed:***

- Identify existing and potential sites for industrial zoning districts near highways
- Explore ways in which the zoning requirements in these districts can be changed to encourage development in these districts
- Explore ways in which the permitting requirements in these districts can be changed to encourage development in these districts
- Planning Board and Planning Board and Director of Planning shall develop applicable by law to be reviewed by Town Counsel addressing legal aspects

***Expected Results:***

A list of potential locations for industrial zoning districts near highways will be developed and specialized zoning and permitting requirements will be drafted to encourage development in these sites.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board and Land Use Subcommittee

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Land Use Subcommittee



## **GOAL 5: Separating areas of commercial development**

### **OBJECTIVE A:**

**Rezoning the Route 3A corridor (Boston Road) in order to allow development of special residential construction (multi-family, townhouses, special use, assisted living, etc.) to separate commercial focal points and limit them to clearly defined areas while protecting the historical character**

### **Discussion:**

Rezoning the 3A corridor could have a number of positive effects on the Town. First, one long strip of commercial development can be overwhelming to the resident or visitor. Smaller, better-defined areas of commercial activity may be a better situation for the consumer and the business. Second, multi-family housing is an appropriate use to locate near commercial focal points and the highway system.

### **Action Needed:**

- Determine the existing zoning of the Route 3A corridor
- Explore the option of including the special residential uses (multi-family, townhouses, special use, assisted living, etc.) as permitted uses in the current zoning districts that lie in the Route 3A corridor
- Determine the specific area that should be rezoned (e.g., 500' from the centerline of Route 3A, along property lines of properties that are immediately adjacent to Route 3A, etc.)
- Contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development to obtain copies of related zoning bylaws from other Massachusetts communities
- Planning Board and Planning Board and Director of Planning shall develop applicable by law to be reviewed by Town Counsel addressing legal aspects

### **Expected Results:**

A zoning analysis of the Route 3A corridor will be conducted and the Town will determine if the corridor should be rezoned.

### **Responsibility:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning

### **Timing:**

2003 - 2005

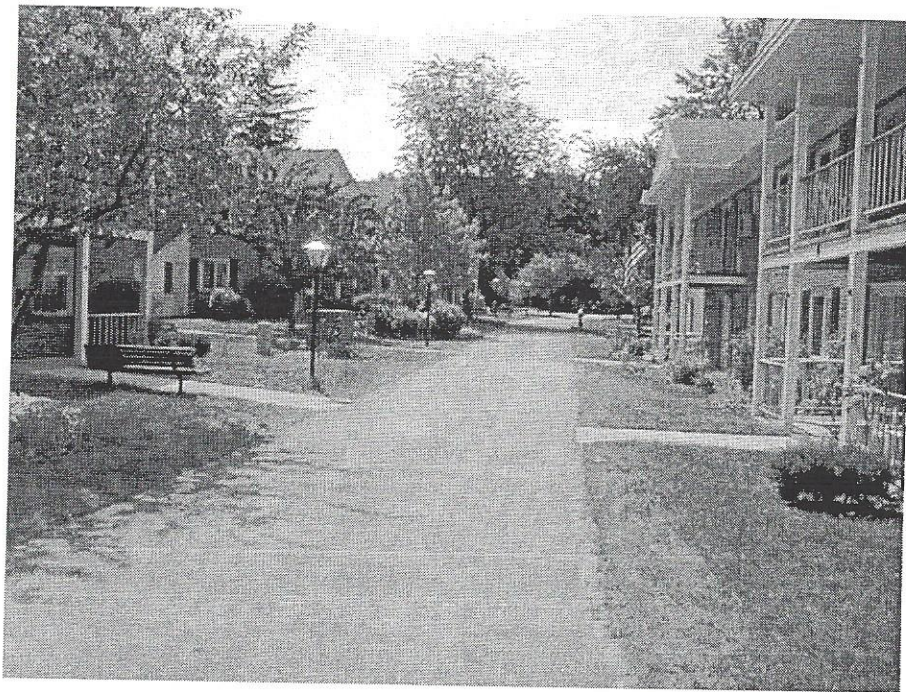
### **Resources:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Land Use Subcommittee, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Subcommittee.

## Chapter Four: Housing

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the Town of Billerica contains 13,160 housing units, which is an increase of 10% (or 1,155 housing units) over the 1990 U.S. Census figures. These single-family homes and multi-family buildings are scattered throughout the Town. New housing is being constructed in the Town, but there is little diversity in the type of construction. The new homes that are being built are large and expensive single-family homes, which is also the current trend throughout the Northeast. Apartments and starter homes are not being constructed at the same rate at this time.

According to local realtors and planners that were surveyed in *The State of the Town Data Report* produced by Mullin Associates, Inc., the current housing market in the Town of Billerica is tight. There is little housing that is currently for sale or for rent and the housing that is available comes at high prices. As the housing supply becomes limited and the Town and region's employment base continues to rise as local technology and communications firms expand, it is anticipated that the housing market will become more competitive in the years to come.



*Billerica Housing Authority Property*

### ***Issues and Concerns***

At the Planning Charrette held by Mullin Associates, Inc. on May 5, 2001, the participants raised the following housing issues:

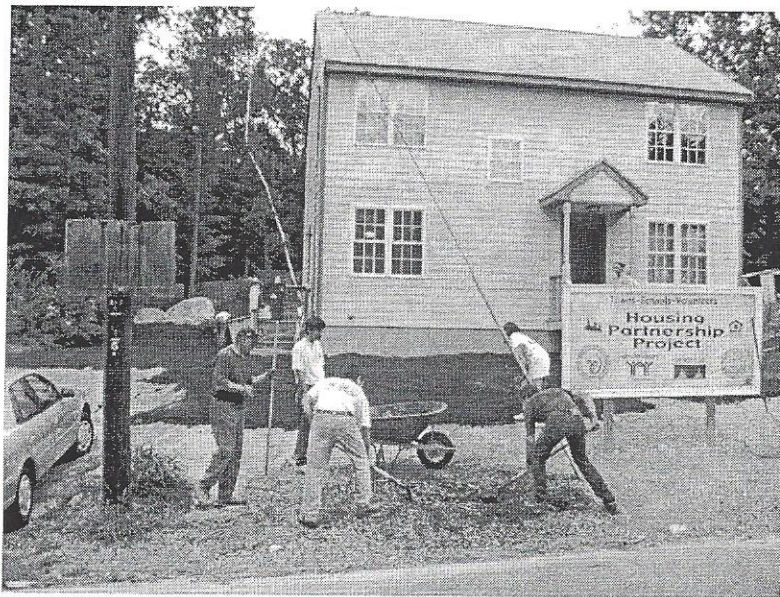
- One of the weaknesses of the Town of Billerica is that there is a lack of affordable housing.
- One of the opportunities for the Town of Billerica is to provide affordable housing.
- One of the threats for the Town of Billerica is that there is not enough affordable housing for younger people who want to settle.



- Two of the preliminary actions that were proposed by participants include (1) provide for housing needs (both affordable and for the elderly) and (2) build Town-run affordable housing.

The Charrette was followed by a Community Survey that was conducted in September 2001, which included questions about housing. According to the Community Survey Summary Report by the Billerica Long Range Master Planning Committee, respondents indicated that more senior housing should be built and that fewer single-family homes, affordable housing, townhouse/condominiums, rental apartments and mobile homes should be built. The majority of the respondents felt it was important for Billerica to limit the number of new homes built annually and that it was only slightly important to increase residential development.

Building upon the information learned from the Charrette and the Survey results, the Housing Sub-Committee of the Billerica Long Range Master Planning Committee determined that the most critical housing issue facing the Town of Billerica is the affordable housing shortage. Also of utmost importance was the ability for the Town to be able to control its future developmental growth and maintain affordable numbers in perpetuity.



*Housing In Partnership Project, between the Town, Shawsheen Valley Regional Technical High School and Habitat for Humanity*

The state's goal that the Town has 10% of its year round housing stock designed as affordable has caused concern that the Town will lose some of its control in developing a Long Range Master Plan. The Town currently has 1.6% of its housing stock recognized by the state as affordable and is looking to increase that percentage and distribute it evenly throughout the Town with a mixture of first time homeowners, starter apartments, over 55 housing and assisted living units. The Comprehensive Permit Law (state statute Chapter 40B) may make this goal more difficult. Because the Town has less than 10% affordable housing, a developer can apply for a single comprehensive permit issued by the local Zoning Board of Appeals to fast track a development that contains 25% affordable and ask the ZBA to override local zoning regulations considered inconsistent with affordable housing needs. The Town loses some of its control on its goal to spread affordable housing, density issues and other zoning regulations approved in Town Meetings. The question is how can the Town successfully attain the state recommended affordable housing percentage and maintain neighborhood character and integrity?

Billerica currently has 13,055 year round housing units of which only 216 are considered affordable by state guidelines: a shortfall of 1,090 units. It would seem that a look at existing zoning bylaws might be in order. The Town currently has inclusionary zoning bylaws that request builders of multi-family housing to provide up to 10% of the units as affordable. This does not currently apply to developers of subdivisions. This one change could make reaching the recommended 10% goal that much easier.



## ***Goals and Objectives***

Based on the issues listed above, the Housing Sub-Committee developed the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: The Town should review and update (as needed) the housing goals on a regular basis

Objective A: The Long Range Master Planning Committee, in coordination with the Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership Committee will be charged with the periodic oversight of the goals set forth.

Goal 2: Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (Including all socio-economic groups)

Objective A: Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw changes to allow mixed use affordable developments/housing units over or within commercial property in certain areas. This would be by special permit of the Planning Board.

Objective B: Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw changes allowing subsidized housing units to be built by the Billerica Housing Authority or by private partnerships with Housing Authority oversight.

Objective C: Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw changes to allow non-family renting of in-law apartments when for state approved affordable use. Qualification would be regulated by state standards.

Objective D: Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw to establishing linkage fees from large commercial and industrial developments to fund affordable housing.

Objective E: Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw to establish fee waivers or reductions to encourage affordable housing.

Objective F: Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw to require that single-family developments have the same 10% affordable component as multifamily projects.

Objective G: Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw changes to promote density bonuses for developments that provide more than 10% affordable requirements.

Objective H: Ensure that affordable housing units remain affordable in perpetuity.

Goal 3: Protect the residential living environment of existing and proposed residential areas

Objective A: Allow development only if the infrastructure is adequate and available to serve it. The Town shall be responsible for establishing plans that will make explicit what standards must be met prior to development approval. Infrastructure in this sense includes water, sewer, roads and public services such as schools and fire protection.

Objective B: Require industrial and commercial uses to be buffered from residential and other sensitive land uses.

Objective C: Utilize wetlands and other lands which are unsuitable for development as buffers between residential areas and other uses and to provide passive recreation opportunities and an open space setting for residential development.

Objective D: Protect wetlands, steep slopes and other environmentally sensitive areas by prohibiting development of housing sites in these areas.

Goal 4: Locate housing of varying densities on sites, which are appropriate for such densities

Objective A: Continue to keep lower density single-family residential uses on medium to large lots (40-50,000 sq.) in areas of the Town where the level of activity is less intensive.

Objective B: Sites near highways and business areas that can be effectively served by public services and facilities should be considered for multi-family housing.

Objective C: Use rational location criteria as a tool for evaluating sites that are appropriate for multi-family use.

Goal 5: Provide affordable housing opportunities at locations that are compatible with surrounding land use and are conducive to the well-being of the Town residents

Objective A: Billerica will address the state standard of making 10% of housing stock available for persons and families of low and/or moderate income by actively pursuing the production of affordable housing units, working with local developers to encourage that each new project has at least 10% affordable housing included, and to work with Habitat for Humanity or other non-profit agencies.

Objective B: Encourage and assist the development of affordable housing for families of various sizes, incomes and ages by the following means:

- Establish a revolving fund to purchase existing units for resale as affordable under the state required restrictions.
- Explore the possibility of an ecumenical or other cooperation to build affordable housing (Habitat for Humanity model).
- Provide incentives to developers to give back pro bono labor.
- Encourage the development of a non-profit Community Development Corporation (CDC) to develop Town owned or private property.
- Seek private donations of land for affordable housing development via a CDC.

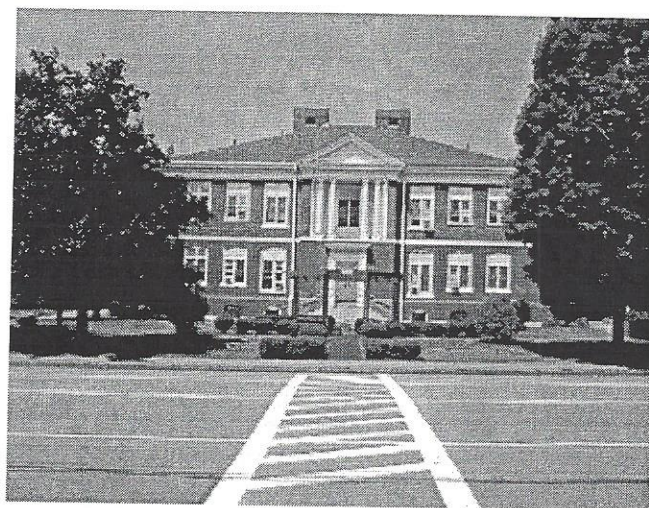
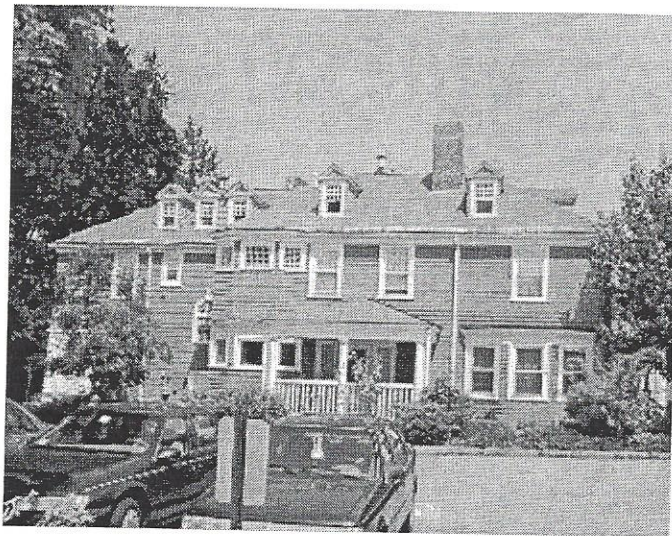
Objective C: Continue to actively participate in the state's Housing Partnership Program.

Objective D: Dedicate personnel to work with the Planning Board and Director of Planning to research state funding sources/grants for and to otherwise promote private/public development of affordable housing.

Objective E: Encourage the location of affordable housing in appropriate areas with no undue concentrations of low and moderate-income families.

Objective F: Encourage the location of affordable housing in small-scale developments scattered in all areas of the Town.







## ***Implementation Strategies***

**GOAL 1:** *The Town should review and update (as needed) the housing goals on a regular basis*

**OBJECTIVE A:**

The Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee, in coordination with the Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership Committee, will be charged with the periodic oversight of the goals set forth

***Discussion:***

So that all the time and energy that the various Town employees and volunteers put into developing these goals, objectives, and actions is not wasted, the progress towards completing action items should be reviewed on a regular basis. The Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee, in consultation with the Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership Committee, is the appropriate group to review the progress of these actions and report back to the Town Manager and Town Meeting.

***Action Needed:***

- Members of the Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee, the Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership Committee should determine the frequency with which they should meet
- Members of the Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee, the Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership Committee should determine the appropriate method to update the Town Manager and Town Meeting (memo, public meeting, etc.)

***Expected Results:***

Members of the Long Range Master Planning Committee, the Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership Committee will meet on a regular basis, review the progress of the actions, and report to the Town Manager and Town Meeting.

***Responsibility:***

The Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee, the Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership Committee

***Timing:***

2002 - Ongoing

***Resources:***

The Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee, NMCOG, the Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership Committee

**GOAL 2: Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (including all socioeconomic groups)**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw changes to allow mixed use affordable developments/housing units over or within commercial property in certain areas. This would be by special permit of the Planning Board.

**Discussion:**

Housing is an excellent addition to certain commercial areas. Bringing local stores and restaurants together with residents in close proximity usually increases the level of activities of the area and attracts more people to the area over time. The Town should look for opportunities to provide this type of mixed use in appropriate areas of Billerica.

**Action Needed:**

- Assemble a list of areas and sites that would be affected by these bylaw changes
- Contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws that allow mixed-use affordable developments/housing units over or within commercial property
- Contact some local developers to determine what zoning bylaws would encourage them to produce development plans that involve mixed use affordable developments/housing units over or within commercial property
- Draft a compilation of all the zoning techniques that were gathered from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and local developers for review by the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen
- Planning Board and Planning Board and Director of Planning shall develop applicable by law to be reviewed by Town Counsel addressing legal aspects

**Expected Results:**

After a review of related zoning bylaws, the Planning Board and Director of Planning will draft proposed changes to the zoning bylaw to allow mixed-use affordable developments/housing units over or within commercial property in certain specific areas of the community.

**Responsibility:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning

**Timing:**

2003 - 2005

**Resources:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Legal Counsel, NMCOC, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Land Use Subcommittee, Housing Subcommittee



**GOAL 2: Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (including all socioeconomic groups)**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw changes allowing subsidized housing units to be built by the Billerica Housing Authority or by private partnerships with Housing Authority oversight**

**Discussion:**

While zoning bylaws do not specifically regulate the type of entity that builds affordable housing or subsidized housing units, they could create a situation that makes housing development in general very expensive. In order to support the development of subsidized housing units that involve the Billerica Housing Authority, the Town of Billerica can ensure that its zoning bylaws and permitting procedures work together to keep housing development costs down.

**Action Needed:**

- Review zoning bylaws to ensure that affordable housing development costs are kept at a minimum (e.g., allowing for multiple housing units, allowing for accessory units, smaller minimum lot sizes, providing density bonuses for either cluster development and/or inclusion of affordable units, smaller minimum housing footprints for affordable units, etc.)
- Review permitting process for ways in which it can be expedited for the development of affordable housing
- Contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws that help keep housing development costs at a minimum
- Contact the Housing Authority to determine what changes to the zoning bylaws and permitting procedures would encourage them to produce more subsidized housing units
- Draft a compilation of all the zoning techniques that were gathered from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and the Housing Authority for review by the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen
- Consult with Legal Counsel to draft changes to the zoning bylaw

**Expected Results:**

If appropriate, the zoning bylaws and the permitting procedures will be amended to accelerate the development of subsidized housing by or including the Housing Authority.

**Responsibility:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning

**Timing:**

2003 - 2004

**Resources:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Land Use Subcommittee, Housing Subcommittee, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

**GOAL 2: Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (Including all socioeconomic groups)**

**OBJECTIVE C:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw changes to allow non-family renting of in-law apartments when for state approved affordable use. Qualification would be regulated by state standards.

***Discussion:***

One method to provide for the housing needs of future Billerica residents is to broaden regulations related to the renting of in-law apartments to include renting to non-family members. This change will allow homeowners to continue living in their homes because of the added income from renting the in-law apartment and will provide housing to renters that is often preferable to and more affordable than that which is found in apartment complexes.

***Action Needed:***

- Review current zoning bylaws related to in-law apartments
- Contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws that allow non-family renting of in-law apartments
- Draft a compilation of all the zoning bylaws that were gathered from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for review by the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen
- Consult with Legal Counsel to draft changes to the zoning bylaw and to ensure that the Town would receive inventory credit under chapter 40B for any in-law affordable units

***Expected Results:***

After a review of related zoning bylaws, the changes to the zoning bylaw will be drafted to allow non-family renting of in-law apartments.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Subcommittee



**GOAL 2: Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (including all socioeconomic groups)**

**OBJECTIVE D:**

**Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw to establishing linkage fees from large commercial and industrial developments to fund affordable housing**

***Discussion:***

In Massachusetts, linkage fees are currently only allowed in the City of Boston. As a result, the Town of Billerica should explore possible legislation or identify other ways in which it can encourage businesses to take a more active role in assisting their employees and/or others in finding housing.

***Action Needed:***

- Work with local housing groups to develop ways in which businesses can assist employees with housing (assistance with down payments and application fees, help with housing search, etc.)
- Research local, state, and federal grant/loan programs that provide housing assistance. For example, go to the website (<http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/>) and follow the link entitled, "How to Obtain Housing Assistance in MA"
- Gather or develop informational materials about housing assistance. Distribute them to all local businesses
- Consult with Legal Counsel and/or local legislators about ways to permit linkage fees.

***Expected Results:***

The Town, local business owners, and employees will become aware of the various local, state, and federal programs that offer housing assistance.

***Responsibility:***

Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Housing Subcommittee, local Community Development Corporation(s), Internet, housing advocacy groups (CHAPA, National Community Development Association, etc.), NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Billerica Plan, Billerica Chamber of Commerce

**GOAL 2: Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (including all socioeconomic groups)**

**OBJECTIVE E:**

**Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw to establish fee waivers or reductions to encourage affordable housing**

***Discussion:***

At the Planning Board meeting of September 10, 2001 the Board voted to reduce the fees for Special Permits and Subdivision applications that include an affordable housing element. The fees will be waived in the same percentage as the number of affordable units provided within the development. As a result of a recent bylaw change, the Planning Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority for all residential development obligated to provide affordable units as an element of any such proposal.

Additionally, at the Board of Selectmen meeting of September 4, 2001 the Board voted to adopt a Town-wide policy to waive permit fees for that portion of certain developments that is made affordable. The Policy reads: "It is the policy of Billerica to waive permit fees by the percentage of affordable units within subject projects developed by nonprofit organizations, the Billerica Housing Authority or those qualified through the Local Incentive Program (LIP). These fee reductions shall not apply to comprehensive permit fees."

***Action Needed:***

- For more ideas to encourage affordable housing, go to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development website (<http://www.massdhcd.com/eo418/homepage2.htm>) and follow the link entitled, "Best Practices/Successful Activities"
- Research whether by-law or other changes should be proposed.

***Expected Results:***

Two Town Boards voted to reduce the fees to encourage affordable housing.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2002

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development



**GOAL 2:** *Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (including all socioeconomic groups)*

**OBJECTIVE F:**

**Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw to require that single-family developments have the same 10% affordable component as multifamily projects**

***Discussion:***

By providing incentives to developers of single family housing for including an affordable component in their subdivisions, the Town should make great strides in addressing future affordable housing needs. By doing this, the Town of Billerica will move closer to meeting the requirements of Chapter 40B while at the same time mixing the income levels of residents within neighborhoods.

***Action Needed:***

- Contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws that require that single-family developments have a 10% affordable component
- Draft a compilation of all the zoning bylaws that were gathered from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for review by the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen
- Consult with Legal Counsel to draft changes to the zoning bylaw

***Expected Results:***

A bylaw will be drafted that provides incentives to developers that dedicate at least 10% of the housing units in certain single-family housing developments as affordable housing units.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Subcommittee, housing advocacy groups (e.g., CHAPA)

**GOAL 2:** *Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (including all socioeconomic groups)*

**OBJECTIVE G:**

**Planning Board and Director of Planning to draft and propose zoning bylaw changes to promote density bonuses for developments that provide more than 10% affordable requirements**

***Discussion:***

By providing density bonuses to developers that provide more than 10% affordable housing within housing developments, the Towns should make great strides in addressing future affordable housing needs. The Town of Billerica will move closer to meeting the requirements of Chapter 40B while at the same time mixing the income levels of residents within neighborhoods.

***Action Needed:***

- Contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws that create density bonuses for developments that provide more than 10% affordable requirements
- Draft a compilation of all the zoning bylaws that were gathered from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for review by the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen
- Consult with Legal Counsel to draft changes to the zoning bylaw

***Expected Results:***

After a review of related zoning bylaws, the changes to the zoning bylaw will be drafted to improve density bonuses for developments that provide more than 10% affordable requirements.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003 - 2004

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Subcommittee

**GOAL 2: Provide for the housing needs of the existing and projected Billerica population (including all socioeconomic groups)**

**OBJECTIVE H:**

**Ensure that affordable housing units remain affordable in perpetuity**

***Discussion:***

One cannot guarantee that all affordable housing will remain affordable forever. Owners of housing developments can choose not to renew their affordable housing agreements thereby placing their housing units out on the open market. In order to prepare for this reality, the Town of Billerica should be constantly aware of opportunities to negotiate or require perpetuity clauses in Chapter 40B and other developments and to add units to its Chapter 40B inventory.

***Action Needed:***

- To support housing units being affordable in perpetuity, the Town should review its Chapter 40B housing list to determine which properties have indefinite affordability and those that are funded through programs with end-dates on their affordability
- The Town should keep in regular contact with local proprietors of Chapter 40B properties to keep up to date on the intentions of the proprietors with regards to offering affordable units in the future
- The Town should always be on the look out for opportunities to create or develop new affordable properties and to negotiate or require perpetuity clauses in new affordable developments

***Expected Results:***

More affordable units in perpetuity.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Billerica Housing Partnership Committee

***Timing:***

2003 - Ongoing

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Billerica Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority, Chapter 40B Proprietors, NMCOC, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development



**GOAL 3: Protect the residential living environment of existing and proposed residential areas**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

Allow development only if the infrastructure is adequate and available to serve it. The Town shall be responsible for establishing plans that will make explicit what standards must be met prior to development approval. Infrastructure in this sense includes water, sewer, roads and public services such as schools and fire protection.

**Discussion:**

The extent of the existing infrastructure is a strong influence on the type and density of development. While developers can opt to pay for improvements to local infrastructure that will benefit their future customers, oftentimes they will work within the confines of the existing infrastructure system as they plan for their projects. The Town of Billerica should make clear its standards for tie-ins to and improvements to the existing infrastructure so that there are no misunderstandings or unnecessary delays.

**Action Needed:**

- When development applications are submitted to the Town, all municipal departments should review the plans and forward any issues that they have with them to the Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, and the Town Manager
- The various municipal departments should develop and publicly distribute their minimum requirements that developers must meet in order to receive their approval
- Develop and update a Capital Improvements Plan for the Town

**Expected Results:**

Town issues and requirements related to the provision of infrastructure in development plans will be clearly defined and enforced.

**Responsibility:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning

**Timing:**

2003 - Ongoing

**Resources:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Department of Public Safety Services (Police Department, Fire Department), Department of Public Works, NMCOC, School Department

**GOAL 3: Protect the residential living environment of existing and proposed residential areas**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Require industrial and commercial uses to be buffered from residential and other sensitive land uses**

***Discussion:***

As the business community grows in Billerica, residents should not be punished by the many potential negative effects of this growth, such as noise and increased traffic. Buffers around industrial and commercial uses that are within close proximity to residential neighborhoods are an excellent way to mitigate the potential negative effects of industrial and commercial uses on sensitive land uses.

***Action Needed:***

- Contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws related to buffering residential and other sensitive land uses from industrial and commercial uses
- Draft a compilation of all the zoning bylaws that were gathered from Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for review by the Planning Board, Legal Counsel, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen
- Consult with Legal Counsel to draft changes to the zoning bylaw

***Expected Results:***

A bylaw will be drafted that requires industrial and commercial uses to install buffering techniques to protect adjacent residential and other sensitive land uses.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Legal Counsel, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Subcommittee

**GOAL 3: Protect the residential living environment of existing and proposed residential areas**

**OBJECTIVE C:**

Utilize wetlands and other lands which are unsuitable for development as buffers between residential areas and other uses and to provide passive recreation opportunities and an open space setting for residential development

**Discussion:**

As the Town of Billerica grows, buffering between different land uses will become an increasingly important issue. Existing land types, such as wetlands and other lands that are unsuitable for development at this time, can serve as excellent natural buffers between incompatible uses. To further enhance the buffers and to provide for alternate uses within them, passive recreation uses (i.e., trails, picnicking, etc.) can be incorporated into the design of the buffers.

**Action Needed:**

- Review the Subdivision Control Regulations and the Zoning Bylaw to ensure that wetlands and other lands that are unsuitable for development can be used as buffers in perpetuity
- Consider placing these lands under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission or placing a conservation restriction on these lands. These may be the best ways to protect them from future development
- Work with the Recreation Department and local trails/volunteer groups to create passive recreation activities in these lands

**Expected Results:**

The Town will require that when wetlands and other lands that are unsuitable for development are used as buffers, the lands be protected from future development.

**Responsibility:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board and Conservation Commission

**Timing:**

2003 - 2005

**Resources:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning, NMCOG, Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Housing Subcommittee



**GOAL 3: Protect the residential living environment of existing and proposed residential areas**

**OBJECTIVE D:**

**Protect wetlands, steep slopes and other environmentally sensitive areas by prohibiting development of housing sites in these areas**

***Discussion:***

Protecting environmentally sensitive areas is good for both the Town of Billerica and for future residents of the Town. If these areas are left unprotected, the Town will be charged with addressing issues like runoff and drainage related to these developments indefinitely and future residents will be forced to deal with difficult living situations. The municipal departments and Boards/Commissions of Billerica need to work together within the legal system to prevent the development of housing sites that are not of high quality.

***Action Needed:***

- The Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, and the Board of Health should work together to approve housing developments of high quality.
- When housing development applications are submitted to the Town, all municipal departments should review the plans and forward any issues that they have with them to the Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, and the Town Manager.

***Expected Results:***

To the extent that is legally possible, the Town will work with developers to protect wetlands, steep slopes and other environmentally sensitive areas by prohibiting development of housing sites in these areas.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Building Inspector

***Timing:***

2003 - Ongoing

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, NMCOG, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Building Inspector, all municipal departments involved with the review of development applications

**GOAL 4: Locate housing of varying densities on sites, which are appropriate for such densities**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Continue to keep lower density single family residential uses on medium to large lots (40,000 to 50,000 square feet) in areas of the Town where the level of activity is less intensive**

***Discussion:***

In order to avoid difficult situations in the future related to incompatible uses, the Town of Billerica should review its zoning policies for locating lower density housing developments. Lower density housing may be more compatible with the outlying areas of Town that are not within close proximity to the more intensively used central areas of Billerica.

***Action Needed:***

- Determine the areas of the Town where the level of urban activity is less intensive than in the more central areas
- Review the zoning district regulations in those areas of less intensive urban activity to determine the allowed uses and the requirements for minimum lot size

***Expected Results:***

Maintain bylaw that allows lower density single family residential uses on medium to large lots (40,000 to 50,000 square feet) in areas of the Town where the level of urban activity is less intensive than in the more central areas.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Housing Subcommittee, NMCOG, Legal Counsel

**GOAL 4: Locate housing of varying densities on sites, which are appropriate for such densities**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Sites near major highways and business areas that can be effectively served by public services and facilities should be considered for multi-family housing projects**

***Discussion:***

At this time, the Town of Billerica would like to diversify its housing stock by encouraging the creation of good quality new housing of a variety of densities on sites that can properly accommodate high-density housing. The Town should conduct research on potential sites along major roadways, in commercial/business zoning districts, and along public transportation routes. Additionally, the Town should determine if there are local partners who are interested in developing multi-family housing in conjunction with the Town.

***Action Needed:***

- Determine what types of multi-family housing that should be encouraged to develop in the Town of Billerica (townhouses/condominiums, apartment houses, elderly housing, etc.).
- Review the zoning map to determine where the preferred types of multi-family housing can be developed and to determine the necessary steps in the permitting process.
- Review public transportation maps to determine the proximity of the local routes to the different potential locations for the multi-family housing.
- Review Assessors maps to gather information about available land for the multi-family housing.
- Research opportunities for grants that can assist in the development of multi-family housing and for local housing developers (private developers, private non-profits, Billerica Housing Authority, etc.) to partner with the Town to create multi-family housing.

***Expected Results:***

Several potential sites will be determined to be suitable for the development of multi-family housing and a variety of monetary resources to assist in the funding of such housing will be uncovered.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Housing Partnership Committee, NMCOG, Billerica Housing Authority

***Timing:***

2003-2005

***Resources:***

Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, Billerica Housing Authority, Planning Board and Director of Planning, Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA), Assessors Department, and Housing Partnership Committee



**GOAL 4: Locate housing of varying densities on sites, which are appropriate for such densities**

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Use rational location criteria as a tool for evaluating sites that are appropriate for multi-family use**

***Discussion:***

In order to properly plan for multi-family uses and to avoid conflicts in the future, the Town of Billerica could benefit from developing rational location criteria for evaluating potential multi-family sites. The Town can review present multi-family developments to see which aspects work and which do not. Following this analysis, the Town can develop its own list of "musts" for such developments. From there, the Town should work with developers of future multi-family developments to ensure that they are successful both from the Town's perspective and from the residents' perspective.

***Action Needed:***

- Review present multi-family developments to see what aspects are working and what ones could be improved upon.
- Determine the location needs of multi-family housing developments (i.e., public transportation routes, sidewalks, proximity to stores, proximity to public recreational sites, proximity to other multi-family housing, etc.).
- Determine the site needs of such developments (i.e., parking requirements, trash disposal, fire protection, etc.).
- Determine zoning requirements for such developments (i.e., property size and setback requirements, buffers, [FAR], etc.).
- Create rating system based on the needs and requirements listed above for use in evaluating sites that are appropriate for multi-family use.

***Expected Results:***

Rational location criteria will be compiled and a rating system will be developed in order to evaluate sites that are appropriate for multi-family use.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Housing Partnership Committee, NMCOG, Housing Authority

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Housing Subcommittee, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority, Planning Board and Director of Planning

**GOAL 5: Provide affordable housing opportunities at locations that are compatible with surrounding land use and are conducive to the well-being of the Town residents**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

Billerica will address the state standard of making 10% of housing stock available for persons and families of low and/or moderate income by actively pursuing the production of affordable housing units, working with local developers to encourage that each new project has at least 10% affordable housing included, and to work with Habitat for Humanity or other non-profit agencies

**Discussion:**

According to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, the Town of Billerica has only 1.65% of its housing as subsidized housing under the Chapter 40B Program. Based on the 2000 Census, the Town has 13,055 year round housing units, of which 216 are Chapter 40B units. Based on this information, in order for the Town to reach the state's standard of 10%, the Town will need to add 1,089 Chapter 40B units to its housing stock.

**Action Needed:**

- Obtain information on the various programs to create Chapter 40B housing units and distribute them to developers throughout the community
- Develop a detailed action plan with non-profit group to develop Chapter 40B or other affordable housing units in the Town
- Review the list of available municipal land to determine if any of the properties could be used to develop housing for persons and families of low and/or moderate income
- Work with local, state and federal housing groups to develop strategies to create Chapter 40B or other qualified affordable housing

**Expected Results:**

The Town will produce multiple units per year for the indefinite future and will increase its percentage of affordable housing stock.

**Responsibility:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

**Timing:**

2003 - Ongoing

**Resources:**

Housing Subcommittee, local Community Development Corporation(s), Internet, housing advocacy groups (CHAPA, National Community Development Association, etc.), NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority



**GOAL 5:** *Provide affordable housing opportunities at locations that are compatible with surrounding land use and are conducive to the well being of the Town residents*

**OBJECTIVE B:**

Encourage and assist the development of affordable housing for families of various sizes, incomes and ages by the following means:

- Establish a revolving fund to purchase existing units for resale as affordable under the state required restrictions
- Explore the possibility of an ecumenical or other cooperation to build affordable housing (Habitat for Humanity model)
- Provide incentives to developers to give back pro bono labor
- Encourage the development of a non-profit Community Development Corporation (CDC) to develop Town owned or private property
- Seek private donations of land for affordable housing development via a CDC

**Discussion:**

The Town of Billerica plays a major role in the development of affordable housing within its borders. In order to assist private developers in developing housing that is affordable to a wide range of income levels, the Town should identify ways in which it aides in the development process as opposed to being an obstacle.

**Action Needed:**

- Obtain seed money for the revolving fund from local housing groups, businesses and developers
- Ask local religious and other organizations if they have any interest in cooperating together to build affordable housing
- For private development projects, reward pro bono labor with free advertisement and other incentives. Also, ask for donations of products from home improvement chains and local stores
- Consider creating a non-profit CDC or similar organization from members of the Housing Partnership Committee or the Housing Authority. Once created, the CDC could accept private donations of land for housing development

**Expected Results:**

The Town will encourage and assist the development of affordable housing in a variety of ways.

**Responsibility:**

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

**Timing:**

2003 - Ongoing

**Resources:**

Housing Subcommittee, local Community Development Corporation(s), Internet, housing advocacy groups (CHAPA, National Community Development Association, etc.), NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

**GOAL 5:** *Provide affordable housing opportunities at locations that are compatible with surrounding land use and are conducive to the well being of the Town residents*

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Continue to actively participate in the state's Housing Partnership Program**

***Discussion:***

The Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund is a self-supporting state agency that promotes more stable and diverse neighborhoods in cities and Towns across Massachusetts through the development and preservation of affordable housing. The Massachusetts Housing Program provides communities, local housing partnerships, and nonprofit and for-profit developers with technical assistance and below-market financing to create rental housing and homeownership opportunities to revitalize and stabilize neighborhoods (see website: <http://www.mhpfund.com/>). The Town of Billerica will serve its current and future residents well by continuing to be an active participant in the Housing Partnership Fund.

***Action Needed:***

- Stay in close contact with the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Program
- Attend informational programs that are sponsored by the Program
- Maintain list of sites and development opportunities that are eligible for the Program

***Expected Results:***

The Town will continue to be an active participant in the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Program.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

***Timing:***

2002 - Ongoing

***Resources:***

Housing Subcommittee, Housing Partnership Committee, NMCOG, Housing Authority

**GOAL 5:** *Provide affordable housing opportunities at locations that are compatible with surrounding land use and are conducive to the well being of the Town residents*

**OBJECTIVE D:**

**Dedicate personnel to work with the Planning Board and Director of Planning to research State funding sources/grants for and to otherwise promote private/public development of affordable housing**

***Discussion:***

There is a wide range of funding opportunities to benefit the development of affordable housing and dedicated personnel to assist in the search process can be valuable. The research methods and results should be carefully coordinated between the Planning Board and Director of Planning and the dedicated personnel so that there are no misunderstandings and confusion.

***Action Needed:***

- Review the present strategy for researching state funding sources/grants for private/public development of affordable housing and determine the present level of application submittal for grants and other sources
- Review the personnel that are potentially available to work with the Planning Board and Director of Planning to research funding sources/grants (those with Internet access, etc.)
- Set up goals for the personnel
- Meet regularly with the personnel to review progress toward goals

***Expected Results:***

The Town will submit more applications for funding sources to support private/public development of affordable housing than in the past and generate innovative ideas to increase affordable housing.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

***Timing:***

2003 - Ongoing

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Additional Personnel, Housing Subcommittee, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority, Internet, NMCOG, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development



**GOAL 5: *Provide affordable housing opportunities at locations that are compatible with surrounding land use and are conducive to the well being of the Town residents***

**OBJECTIVE E:**

**Encourage the location of affordable housing in appropriate areas with no undue concentrations of low and moderate-income families**

***Discussion:***

The development of affordable housing should be encouraged throughout the Town within reason. This can be done through proper zoning techniques and permitting procedures.

***Action Needed:***

- Determine the areas in Town where there are concentrations of low- and moderate-income families. Determine what constitutes a concentration
- Determine the appropriate areas in Town for the location of affordable housing
- Review zoning bylaw and map to determine if the areas that are determined to be appropriate for the location of affordable housing permit all types of housing developments (not simply single family housing)
- If the Town owns property on which affordable housing can be built, determine if this property is located in the areas that are determined to be appropriate for the location of affordable housing

***Expected Results:***

Affordable housing will be encouraged in appropriate areas of the Town so that there is no undue concentration of low- and moderate-income families.

***Responsibility:***

Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Housing Subcommittee, Housing Partnership Committee, NMCOG, Housing Authority

**GOAL 5:** *Provide affordable housing opportunities at locations that are compatible with surrounding land use and are conducive to the well being of the Town residents*

**OBJECTIVE F:**

**Encourage the location of affordable housing in small-scale developments scattered in all areas of the Town**

***Discussion:***

By locating affordable housing in small-scale developments, the Town of Billerica is looking to disperse the affordable housing throughout the Town. By taking this approach, affordable housing will not be out of place; it will blend right into neighborhoods.

***Action Needed:***

- Define "small-scale development"
- Review the zoning bylaw and map to determine where small-scale developments are currently permitted. If small-scale developments are not permitted throughout the Town, consider amending the zoning bylaw
- Review the zoning bylaw for incentives for developers to locate affordable housing in small-scale developments. Consider amending zoning bylaw to add incentives
- If zoning bylaw is to be amended, consult with Legal Counsel to draft changes to the bylaw

***Expected Results:***

Affordable housing will be located in small-scale developments throughout the Town.

***Responsibility:***

Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

NMCOG, Housing Subcommittee, Housing Partnership Committee, Housing Authority

## *Chapter Six: Education and Schools*

The mission of the Billerica Public Schools is to provide a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment in which our students become critical and creative learners and independent problem solvers. As competent, responsible, and caring citizens, our students will know and apply the communication and computation skills necessary for working and contributing within a diverse global society.

The sub-committee reviewed the "Enrollment Projections & Space Facility Analysis for the Billerica Public Schools" which was provided to the committee By Dr. Calabrese and the Billerica School Committee. This analysis was prepared by The Merrimack Education Center on March 18, 2002. By reviewing this report and discussing issues among the committee, we identified areas of concern with the Billerica School system currently and in the future.

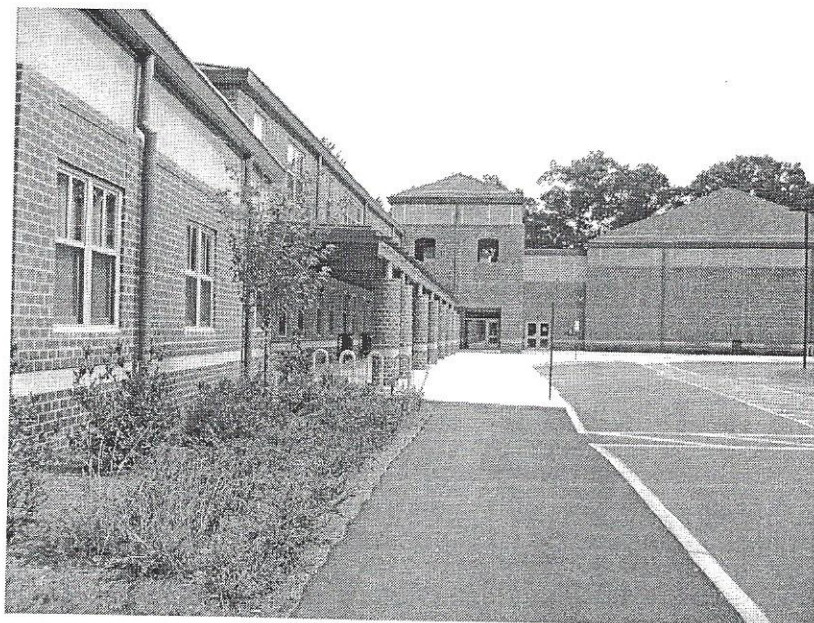
### *Issues and Concerns*

This sub-committee determined that the most critical school issue facing the Town of Billerica is space for the future. With new housing developments turning up in town, an increase in student population will most likely follow. With many of the current schools not having enough space to meet current Massachusetts School Construction Space Guidelines,

(see [http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr38/603cmr38\\_1.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr38/603cmr38_1.html)) any increase in enrollment would put an additional burden on the Billerica School System. Without reducing the student population at each school, any building expansion for the schools would require land. Currently each school does not have this luxury, and if any land was available, recreation uses are also desired.

As of May 1, 2002, Billerica has 6,684 children in the school system. The school system consists of 6 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school. There is also a regional technical high school located in Billerica whose enrollment consists of Billerica students and students from 4 surrounding towns.

Billerica's population from the 2000 census is at 38,981 residents, an increase of 1,372 over the 1990 census figure of 37,609 or 3.6%. The birthrate has slowed considerably. There is a correlation between the cost of housing and the number of children per unit. The population in the community is aging, and housing re-sells will repopulate the schools and change the demographics.





The Charrette was followed by a Community Survey that was conducted in September 2001. The survey included questions about what was important for the Town to accomplish from the perspective of the residents. According to the Community Survey Summary Report by the Billerica Long Range Master Planning Committee, respondents indicated that it was important for the Town of Billerica to improve the schools.

In addition to the information learned from the Charrette and the Survey results, the Education Sub-Committee reviewed the "Enrollment Projections & Space Facility Analysis for the Billerica Public Schools" which was provided to the committee by Dr. Calabrese and the Billerica School Committee. This analysis was prepared by the Merrimack Education Center on March 18, 2002. By reviewing this report and discussing issues among the committee, the Sub-Committee identified areas of concern with the Billerica School system, both currently and for the future.

## *Goals and Objectives*

- Goal 1: Ensure comprehensive educational offerings in the community, including but not limited to vocational education and comprehensive high school. The goal is to maintain and improve the current educational system and ensure that it remains a staple of the quality of life in Billerica.
- Objective A: Maintain adequate/optimum class size, staffing levels.
- Objective B: Constantly review facilities to support changing curriculums.
- Objective C: Ensure continued financial support for the schools.
- Goal 2: Ensure adequate classroom space and facilities according to Massachusetts's school standards to support projected student population from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
- Objective A: Ascertain, monitor and ensure/maintain minimal state guidelines for classroom space and number of children per class.
- Objective B: Determine appropriate re-use of the Ditson School Building, and ensure proper temporary use of the facility in the interim.
- Objective C: Ensure Flexibility in School Capacity.
- Goal 3: Preservation of Land in the Community for school and recreational purposes.
- Objective A: Purchase Property
- Objective B: Maximize the use of school facilities to meet the needs of community, educational, recreational and non-profit community organizations.
- Goal 4: The Long Range Master Planning Committee in coordination with the School Committee and Billerica School Administration will be charged with the periodic oversight of the goals set forth.

## *Implementation Strategies*

**GOAL 1:** *Ensure comprehensive educational offerings in the community, including but not limited to, vocational education and comprehensive high school. The goal is to maintain and improve the current educational system and ensure that it remains a staple of the quality of life in Billerica.*

### **OBJECTIVE A:**

**Maintain adequate/optimum class size, staffing levels.**

#### ***Discussion:***

In order to provide the best possible education for the children of Billerica, the schools should strive to optimize class sizes and staffing levels. Class size and adequate staffing levels are essential for the education of children. Special Education classes by the nature of the type of instruction are small.

#### ***Action Needed:***

- Determine the adequate/optimum class size per grade level and school
- Determine the adequate/optimum staffing levels per grade level and school
- Determine the adequate/optimum costs of operation per school
- Determine methods in which the adequate/optimum class size can be maintained
- Determine methods in which the adequate/optimum staffing levels can be maintained
- Determine methods in which the adequate/optimum costs of operation can be maintained
- Ensure flexibility in school capacity based on current and projected student population

#### ***Expected Results:***

The Billerica School System will offer an adequate number of classrooms and teachers.

#### ***Responsibility:***

The School Administration

#### ***Timing:***

Ongoing

#### ***Resources:***

School Administration, Massachusetts Department of Education, Planning Department



**GOAL 1:** *Ensure comprehensive educational offerings in the community, including but not limited to vocational education and comprehensive high school. The goal is to maintain and improve the current educational system and ensure that it remains a staple of the quality of life in Billerica.*

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Constantly review facilities to support changing curriculums.**

***Discussion:***

To provide comprehensive educational opportunities to youth, the School Administration needs to keep current on the latest trends in curriculums. Each year the classroom and space utilization needs to be reviewed and matched to the number of students in the schools. Space for programs such as Special Education, Computers and the Fine Arts needs to exist in each school.

***Action Needed:***

- Annual matching of facilities to curricular offerings
- New programs need to be housed in proper facilities
- Review the technological capabilities of the existing facilities
- Research the recent trends in technology and review their facility requirements
- Research the recent trends in curriculums and review their facility requirements
- Determine the costs associated with installing the necessary facility requirements to support the most recent trends in technology and curriculums

***Expected Results:***

The existing school facilities and curriculums will be reviewed for their potential to adapt to changes in technologies and curriculums. This review process will result in the better use of existing facilities and renovations to existing facilities to accommodate new curriculums.

***Responsibility:***

School Committee

***Timing:***

Ongoing

***Resources:***

School Administration, Internet, Massachusetts Department of Education, School Department

**GOAL 1:** *Ensure comprehensive educational offerings in the community, including but not limited to vocational education and comprehensive high school. The goal is to maintain and improve the current educational system and ensure that it remains a staple of the quality of life in Billerica.*

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Ensure continued financial support for the schools**

***Discussion:***

Financial support is at the core of quality education. It is needed to provide for staff as well as physical facilities. Over-reliance on state support for education does not ensure stable financial support for the local school system.

***Action Needed:***

- Educate the community about the cost and the benefits of an exceptional education system
- Hold public educational forums (cable TV shows, presentations, weekend tours of the schools, etc.) and develop informational materials to explain the costs and benefits associated with an exceptional education system
- Involve the entire community (including those who do not have children in the school system) in the benefits of an exceptional education system (e.g., higher property values, use of the computer facilities, use of the recreational facilities, ESL, night/weekend classes, etc.)
- Advocate for increased state and local funding
- Determine present sources of funding for the schools and their potential longevity
- Determine any sources of savings in the schools (change in suppliers, cutting costs, etc.)
- Conduct research on alternate sources of funding (grants, fees, etc.)

***Expected Results:***

The Billerica School system will have an adequate number of classrooms and teachers.

***Responsibility:***

School Administration, Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee and the State of Massachusetts

***Timing:***

2003 - Ongoing

***Resources:***

Massachusetts Department of Education, the Internet, Superintendent of Schools, School Committee, Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, State Representative, State Senator

**GOAL 2: Ensure adequate classroom space and facilities according to Massachusetts's school standards to support projected student population from Kindergarten to Grade 12.**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Ascertain, monitor and ensure/maintain minimal state guidelines for classroom space and number of children per class**

***Discussion:***

The Billerica School Department strives to provide the best education for the youth of Billerica. In order to provide a proper education to those youth, the School Department must follow certain state guidelines. Only one school meets the current Massachusetts standards for school buildings. School buildings built 30 to 50 years ago met standards of 30 to 50 years ago, but do not meet today's standards.

***Action Needed:***

- Phase out use of portable classrooms
- Complete the construction of the Marshall school; this could add up to eight classrooms
- Determine architectural and engineering feasibility of remodeling and/or additions to existing schools
- Review the need for an additional elementary school in West Billerica or in another section of Town
- Determine if there is a need for an early Childhood Education Center to include all day Kindergarten, BEAM (Early Intervention), and Project Support (Pre-school special education), and childcare
- Review the need for infrastructure upgrades for safety such as sidewalks and additional parking, especially at the Marshall and Locke Middle Schools, and the High School
- Determine the number and type of accidents related to safety involving sidewalks/pedestrians and parking at the middle schools and the high school within the past five years
- Review existing sidewalks and other types of infrastructure at the Middle Schools and the High School to determine if improvements are needed
- Review existing parking situation at the Middle Schools and the High School to determine if the situation needs improvement (i.e., additional parking spaces, additional lots, etc.)

***Expected Results:***

The Town will conduct a feasibility analysis & study (including cost estimates) to determine the feasibility of adding classrooms to and/or remodeling existing buildings.

***Responsibility:***

School Committee

***Timing:***

Feasibility Study - End of the 2002-2003 School Year

***Resources:***

Funding for Study, School Department, Massachusetts Department of Education, Student Government



**GOAL 2:** *Ensure adequate classroom space and facilities according to Massachusetts's school standards to support projected student population from Kindergarten to Grade 12.*

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Determine appropriate re-use of the Ditson School Building and ensure proper temporary use of the facility in the interim**

***Discussion:***

The old Ditson School and grounds is an asset in the Town of Billerica. With the completion of the new Ditson School, this building is no longer in use. As planning continues, appropriate temporary use of the building should be pursued.

***Action Needed:***

- Complete feasibility study by the Ditson Reuse Committee
- Obtain information from the re-use and other architectural studies
- School Committee to determine if schools need facility
- Plan Future of the Ditson School

***Expected Results:***

The most effective future use of the old Ditson School and Property will be determined.

***Responsibility:***

School Committee

***Timing:***

End of the 2002-2003 School Year

***Resources:***

Consultants, Ditson Reuse Committee, Superintendent of Schools, Town Manager, School Department, Massachusetts Department of Education



**GOAL 2:** *Ensure adequate classroom space and facilities according to Massachusetts's school standards to support projected student population from Kindergarten to Grade 12.*

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Ensure Flexibility in School Capacity**

***Discussion:***

There are student population shifts among schools each year. Care must be taken not to make permanent alterations to schools because the space may be needed in a different area the following school year.

***Action Needed:***

- Yearly review of projected enrollment
- Obtain information from the re-use and other architectural studies
- School Committee to determine if schools need facility
- Plan future of the Ditson School

***Expected Results:***

The most effective future use of the existing school buildings will be determined.

***Responsibility:***

School Committee

***Timing:***

Yearly and Ongoing

***Resources:***

Consultants, School Administration, Superintendent of Schools, Town Manager, School Department, Massachusetts Department of Education

**GOAL 3: Preservation of land in the community for school and recreational purposes.**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Purchase Property**

***Discussion:***

There exists a great need for land for future school buildings, building additions and for recreational purposes. Limited parking and playing fields exist at each school site.

***Action Needed:***

- Monitor sales of private property adjacent to schools with an eye toward expanding. Perimeter purchases should be part of the long term infrastructure plan
- Save money in a stabilization fund for future land purchases
- Create a wish list for future municipal buildings and properties including appropriate location and size of such properties
- Research funding opportunities for the purchase of open space for future municipal development
- Encourage the Town Departments to keep future needs for municipal open space in mind when reviewing development plans
- Encourage private property owners to donate property to the Town for future development by the Town
- Work in conjunction with others (e.g., land preservation groups) to obtain land, part of which could be used for municipal development
- Review tax title list to determine if any properties should be retained by the Town for future development

***Expected Results:***

The Town will purchase land when available.

***Responsibility:***

School Administration, Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee

***Timing:***

Ongoing

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Superintendent of Schools, Town Manager, School Department, Building Department, Board of Appeals, School Administration, Department of Public Works, Library, Department of Public Safety Services, Recreation Department, Assessors Department, Finance Department/Tax Collector



**GOAL 3: Preservation of land in the community for school and recreational purposes.**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Maximize the use of school facilities to meet the needs of community, educational, recreational and non-profit community organizations.**

**Discussion:**

It is important to continue to explore ways to better use existing land and buildings. The current project of a baseball, softball and soccer field at the Marshall Middle School is an example of improvements in the use of a current facility.

**Action Needed:**

- Assure equity in cost sharing of maintenance, upkeep and support of facilities by community groups
- Review the possibility of a separate municipal department for the maintenance of all playing fields, or the potential for increased funding for the School Department to do so
- Review the need for additional space for High School Athletic programs that currently have inadequate space
- Review the possibility of expanded intramural programs at the Middle School level
- Review the current need for additional parking at the existing recreational fields
- Determine the current number of parking spaces at the existing recreational fields
- Survey users of the fields (school teams, local community groups, etc.) to determine if the current number of parking spaces is sufficient for the current and any potential future uses at the fields
- Identify potential locations for additional parking at the fields or at nearby sites
- Identify ways in which existing parking could be used more efficiently (e.g., staggering team/group use times, adding some parking meters, shuttles, etc.)

**Expected Results:**

The Town will use its land and property optimally.

**Responsibility:**

School Committee and Recreation Commission

**Timing:**

Ongoing

**Resources:**

School Administration, Superintendent of Schools, Town Manager, School Department, High School Athletic Coaches and Teams, Recreation Department, Local Teams and Groups

**GOAL 4:** *The Master Plan Oversight Committee in coordination with the School Committee and Billerica School Administration will be charged with the periodic oversight of the goals set forth.*

**OBJECTIVE A:**

The Master Plan Oversight Committee will meet regularly with the School Committee and the Billerica School Administration to ensure that the goals, objectives, and actions set forth related to the Education and Schools in Billerica will be implemented.

**Discussion:**

So that all the time and energy that the various Town employees and volunteers put into developing these goals, objectives, and actions is not wasted, the progress towards completing action items should be reviewed on a regular basis. The Master Plan Oversight Committee, the School Committee and the Billerica School Administration are the appropriate groups to review the progress of these actions and report back to the Town Manager and the School Committee.

**Action Needed:**

- Members of the Master Plan Oversight Committee, the School Committee and the Billerica School Administration should determine the frequency with which they should meet
- Members of the Master Plan Oversight Committee, the School Committee and the Billerica School Administration should determine the appropriate method to update the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen (memo, public meeting, etc.)

**Expected Results:**

Members of the Master Plan Oversight Committee, the School Committee and the Billerica School Administration will meet on a regular basis, review the progress of the actions, and report to the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen.

**Responsibility:**

The Master Plan Oversight Committee, the School Committee and the Billerica School Administration

**Timing:**

2003 - Ongoing

**Resources:**

The Master Plan Oversight Committee, the School Committee and the Billerica School Administration



## *Chapter Seven: Transportation, Facilities and Services*

Billerica is well served by different modes of transportation. The Town is situated near key state arterial routes and rail lines. Easy access to transportation systems has contributed to the type of growth Billerica has seen in the past twenty years. In addition to its rapid growth as a suburb, it has also been a key factor in attracting industry and economic growth.



*A trolley Waiting Room in Billerica Center (Top of River Street), 1903*

Moving traffic through and around the Town of Billerica while striking a balance between safety and convenience continues to be a challenge, especially while attempting to maintain some of the Town's rural character. At the present, long delays exist during morning and evening commutes, both at highways entrances and exits, in the center, and on roads which handle cross through traffic. Projects already in place will improve traffic flow through the Town center and improvements to Route 3

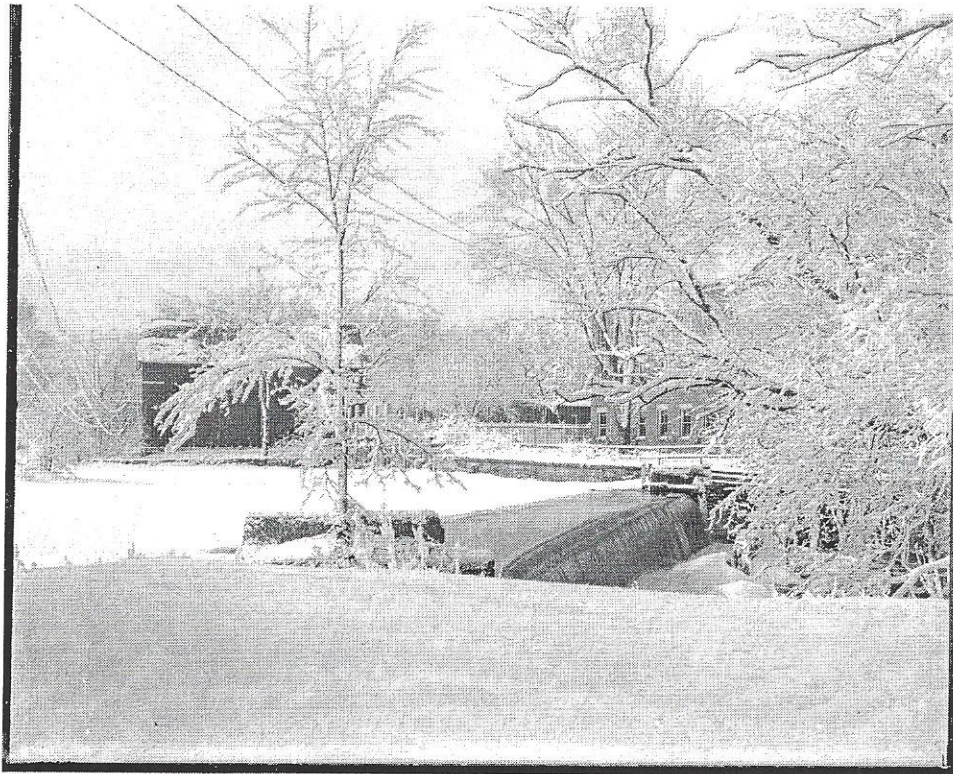
will reduce the backup of cars entering, exiting, and travelling on that roadway in future years.

As the congestion at local intersections continues to grow, the Town of Billerica will need to make changes to maintain acceptable levels of service. The Town will need to determine if residents are willing to change commuting habits. The Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) and the Commuter Rail, along with commuter bus routes and alternative transportation sources, provide reasonable service for those commuting to Boston and still nearly 85% of residents commute to work in single occupant vehicles, while only 2% use public transportation and 9% carpool.

In addition to traffic movement, there are a number of safety issues with the roadways in the Town. Car and truck traffic has increased, and speed is a real problem. The lack of sidewalks in many parts of Town presents safety concerns for pedestrians, especially for children walking to & from school and buses. Finally, the lack of traffic lights adds to safety hazards.

There are other issues related to Facilities and Services, which bear mention in both the Planning Charrette and the Survey, but water/sewer issues dominate. People report it is not uncommon to wait thirty (30) years for sewer connection. The Sewer Master Plan of 1999 is complete, but the State and DEP have established new standards that need to be met. Under the current plan, there are too many minerals, etc. for the rivers to handle. The new philosophy includes satellite plants to discharge into the ground water and re-charge the water table, causing less shock to the rivers.





*Talbot Mills Dam, March 1910*

There is a ten (10) year Drainage Master Plan, yet fixing the overall problem is a huge issue. Despite obstacles, it is critical that the Drainage Plan continues to be a focal point of the DPW. Educating the public with regard to catch basins, outfalls, and issues as simple as the disposal of dog waste is critical. The Water Treatment Plant needs to be completed and brought up to new DEP standards. Pro-active preventive maintenance like water main replacement has not been done in Billerica and is a key element in

addressing this issue.

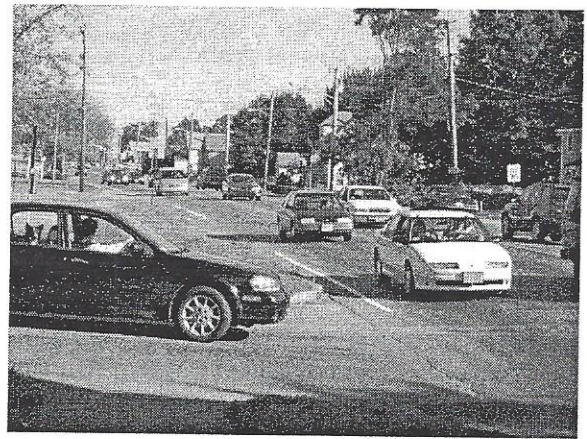
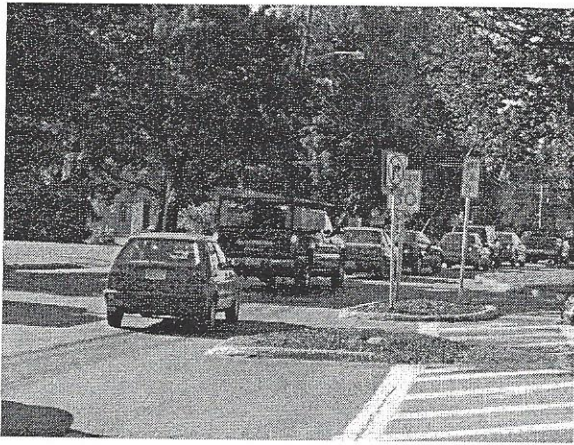
Attention must be given to the best way to limit localized flooding in town. Alternatives include fixing what is fixable, replacing what needs to be replaced concentrating on areas that have the highest cost benefit. We must improve the quality of the water that we put into our drains by better management practices.

### ***Issues and Concerns***

At the Planning Charrette held by Mullin Associates, Inc. on May 5, 2001, the participants raised the following road and circulation issues:

- Some of the strengths of the Town of Billerica are that the Town is centralized with good access to the highway system, and there are a variety of transportation options, including train and bus transportation.
- Some of the weaknesses of the Town are that there is no bike path; there is too much traffic; the public transportation system needs improvement; and Route 3 construction creates a lot of traffic.
- One of the opportunities in Town is to improve traffic.
- Two of the threats in the Town are there is an urgent need to control traffic and roads need to be better maintained.
- Three of the preliminary actions that were proposed by the participants were support more bus routes and alternative transportation; improve gateway roads into the Town; and control heavy trucking by developing truck routes.





The Charrette was followed by a Community Survey that was conducted in September 2001, which included questions about roads and circulation. According to the Community Survey Summary Report by the Billerica Long Range Master Planning Committee, respondents indicated that it was important for the Town of Billerica to improve its roads. Of the three forms of public transportation that are available in the Town, Road Runner was never used by 95% of the respondents and the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) Bus was never used by 89% of the respondents. The MBTA Train was used only slightly more; only 46% indicated they never used it.

One reason for the low levels of public transportation usage is that the Survey respondents report that public transportation is not convenient to their homes. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that public transportation is "not at all convenient" to their home while another 21% indicated that public transportation is only minimally convenient to their home. However, nearly three-quarters of the Survey respondents indicated that even if public transportation were more convenient to their home that they still would make little use of it.

Building upon the information learned from the Charrette and the Survey results, the Circulation, Facilities and Services Sub-Committee of the Billerica Long Range Master Planning Committee determined that the most critical circulation issues facing the Town of Billerica are the existing roadways and traffic *within* Billerica. The number of traffic lights, while increasing, is still not sufficient for safety. In addition, speed limits are regularly exceeded, without sufficient enforcement. Truck traffic, in particular, continues to increase, and speeding is common. State contributions to road improvements frequently involve compromises on speed limits that jeopardize public safety and state funding for traffic lights requires land takings that have proven unpopular and unnecessarily severe. In addition, Mass Highway has cut their contribution to Billerica's Roadway Master Plan by 67% this year, thus Billerica will receive only 33% of what the Town has previously received for highway funding.

Billerica has 216 miles of roads, 166 miles or 77% of which are accepted. Sidewalks are infrequent. The Town is in the third year of a 10-year improvement plan. The Town Street Plan will be updated this year, and it will include expanded construction of sidewalks, especially near schools, recreational facilities, and major roads.

## *Goals and Objectives:*

Based on the issues listed above, the Circulation, Facilities and Services Sub-Committee developed the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Improve adherence to speed limits and regard for traffic lights, especially for truck traffic. Achieve a compromise between safety and convenience while maintaining the Town's rural character.

Objective A: Reduce speeding and traffic light violations and continue to investigate traffic mitigation procedures.

Objective B: Control truck traffic through neighborhoods.

Goal 2: Improve road quality and increase the number of sidewalks on main roads and near schools.

Objective A: Improve street conditions for safer and less stressful co-existence of pedestrian and car traffic.

Objective B: Accept more streets so they can be repaired and made safer.

Goal 3: Ensure that drainage continues to be a focal point of the DPW.

Objective A: Limit localized street flooding in Town. Map drainage system.

Objective B: Increase the level of public education and awareness.

Goal 4: Ensure that sewerage expansion continues to be a focal point of DPW and bring the Water Treatment Plant on line in compliance with all new DEP standards.

Objective A: Improve processing at plant and distribution system in Town.

Objective B: Maximize sewerable area of Town.



## ***Implementation Strategies:***

**GOAL 1:** *Improve adherence to speed limits and regard for traffic lights, especially for truck traffic. Achieve a compromise between safety and convenience while maintaining the Town's rural character.*

### ***OBJECTIVE A:***

Reduce speeding and traffic light violations and continue to investigate traffic mitigation procedures.

### ***Discussion:***

The Town should examine the use of various traffic calming techniques and encourage even wider use of the police presence, which is already being employed.

### ***Action Needed:***

- Continued Police presence and enforcement of speed limits.
- Look into what methods other communities with similar problems used successfully to effect change.
- Increased use of the Traffic Management Committee to make determinations and recommendations on the best course of action for the Town.
- Continued upgrading of all traffic signals.
- Determine which short-term and long-term solutions are most appropriate for the Town streets to reduce rush hour traffic.

### ***Expected Results:***

With the Town still growing, it is expected that traffic will continue to be a problem. The implementation of traffic calming techniques coupled with increased police presence and the upgrading of signalization should aid in the reduction of the traffic and speeding problem.

### ***Responsibility:***

Board of Selectmen as Road Commissioners

### ***Timing:***

Continuing

### ***Resources:***

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Other communities.

**GOAL 1:** *Improve adherence to speed limits and regard for traffic lights, especially for truck traffic. Achieve a compromise between safety and convenience while maintaining the Town's rural character.*

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Controlling truck traffic through neighborhoods.**

***Discussion:***

Working through the Board of Selectmen, as Road Commissioners, the Town could undertake a traffic study to determine the severity of the problem and working with the newly updated Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices to look for ways to address the issue. The Board of Selectmen may wish to look into the possibility of working with local businesses to come to some agreement on possible truck routes and ask them to have their drivers be more sensitive to the speeds in which they travel on neighborhood roads.

***Action needed:***

- Using an independent traffic study to identify areas where truck traffic is most problematic.
- Create a list of areas where truck traffic is a problem and take corrective action in order of rank.
- Estimate amount of funding needed for traffic study and eventual improvements.
- Estimate the number of areas where corrective action can be taken in the course of a year.
- Review and update traffic studies on a five-year basis to check effectiveness of any action taken.

***Expected results:***

Better managing of the truck traffic situation should result in slower speeds, better safety, and a better quality of life for the neighborhoods where truck traffic is currently a problem.

***Responsibility:***

Board of Selectmen

***Timing:***

Ongoing

***Resources:***

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

**GOAL 2: Improve road quality and increase the number of sidewalks on main roads and school areas.**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Improve street conditions for safer and less stressful co-existence of pedestrian and car traffic.**

***Discussion:***

The Town currently has a ten (10) year road improvement plan in place. There is also a sidewalk program that currently targets school areas and main roads. The Town should continue with the road improvement plan and add sidewalks in school areas as money becomes available.

***Action needed:***

- Continue with ten (10) year road improvement plan.
- Continue coordinating road improvement with all utility work such as sewerage, and drainage.
- Conduct a Town-wide survey to inventory all sidewalks and rank in order of need for both new construction and repair.
- Develop uniform sidewalk construction methods.
- Continue to review the number of sidewalks.
- Estimate required number of streets and sidewalks that can be repaired or added in the course of a year.
- Estimate amount of funding needed each year for road construction and sidewalks.
- Review Town-wide survey every five (5) years.
- Brainstorm long-term solutions for improving safety for pedestrians (sidewalk installation, road reconstruction, etc.).
- Determine which short-term and long-term solutions are most appropriate for the streets that were determined to be most dangerous for pedestrians.

***Expected results:***

Road improvement is an on-going process in all communities. The Town's ten (10) year road improvement plan, if followed, should put the Town on solid footing. Targeting main roads and school areas first for sidewalks will improve the co-existence between pedestrian and car traffic.

***Responsibility:***

Selectmen, Planning Board, DPW

***Timing:***

2002-2012

***Resources:***

Sub-division Control Regulations, DPW, Director of Planning and Planning Board



**GOAL 2: Improve road quality and increase the number of sidewalks on main roads and school areas.**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Accept more streets so they can be repaired and made safer.**

***Discussion:***

One way to approach the goal of improving the quality of the roads in the Town is to have the Town accept private streets and take over the responsibility and upkeep of the roadways.

***Action Needed:***

- Determine the characteristics of a street that is acceptable to the Town standards.
- Rank the list of the 50 miles of unaccepted streets based on a variety of measures (length, width, age, location in Town, usage levels, estimated cost to repair, estimated cost to maintain, etc.).
- Estimate the amount of funding and staff-time that can be allocated to the repair of these streets annually.
- Estimate the number of streets that can be repaired on an annual basis.
- Brainstorm long-term solutions for improving safety for pedestrians (sidewalk installation, road reconstruction, etc.).
- Determine which short-term and long-term solutions are most appropriate for the streets that were determined to be most dangerous for pedestrians.

***Expected Results:***

The Town will have a ranked list of unaccepted streets. Based on their ranking and available Town resources, a specific number of streets that can be accepted annually will be determined. Future streets will be built to the standards of the Town so that the list of unaccepted streets will become more manageable over time.

***Responsibility:***

DPW, Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003-2005

***Resources:***

Subdivision Control Regulations, DPW, Planning Department

**GOAL 3: Ensure that drainage continues to be a focal point of the DPW.**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Limit localized street flooding in Town. Map drainage system.**

***Discussion:***

Localized flooding has been a problem for many years and the Town has been working to improve the drainage system by installing more catch basins and culverts. The Town needs to continue with its ten (10) year Drainage Master Plan and should undertake the mapping of the Town's Drainage System.

***Action needed:***

- Continue drainage work and repair.
- Map Drainage System.
- Rank areas where drainage is a problem in order of importance.
- Estimate amount of funding needed to make improvements on a yearly basis.
- Estimate number of projects of drainage that can be done with funding provided.
- Estimate cost to map drainage system.
- Update map on a yearly basis.
- Ensure that drainage systems are designed and constructed with consideration of health impacts.

***Expected results:***

Overall improvement in areas where flooding is a problem should be expected as the Town moves through its ten (10) year plan.

***Responsibility:***

DPW

***Timing:***

Conduct survey every five (5) years.

***Resources:***

Town Meeting, Conservation Commission, DPW, Planning Board, Board of Health.

**GOAL 3: Ensure that drainage continues to be a focal point of the DPW.**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Increase public awareness and education.**

***Discussion:***

One of the problems the Town faces in the area of drainage is the lack of communication the Town has with the residents. The Town can do a better job of communicating to the residents the importance of keeping catch basins and culverts clear so they can properly do their job. Neighborhood meetings, pamphlets, and utilizing BATV are some of the ways the Town could better communicate with the residents.

***Actions needed:***

- Send out mailings with pamphlets explaining to the residents the importance of clear culverts and catch basins.
- Utilize BATV message board.
- Prepare video to be broadcast on BATV.
- Continue the practice of taking school children on tours.

***Expected results:***

Through better education the Town should see an improvement with the problem of flooding due to lack of education on the part of the residents.

***Responsibility:***

DPW, the Conservation Commission and the Board of Health

***Timing:***

2003-2004

***Resources:***

DPW, the Conservation Commission and the Board of Health



**GOAL 4:** *Ensure that sewerage expansion continues to be a focal point of the DPW and bring the Water Treatment Plant on line in compliance with all new DEP standards.*

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Improve processing at plant and distribution system in Town.**

***Discussion:***

The new Water Treatment Plant is beginning even as we speak. The new facility will meet all new DEP standards and should be on line by 2004.

***Action needed:***

- Once plant goes on line develop a new distribution system model to calculate needed changes.
- Rank in order of importance water mains in need of repair/ replacement.
- Estimate cost of work to be done annually.
- Replace water mains where needed.
- Relining and/or repair of water mains where needed.
- Continue to monitor water use and quality.

***Expected results:***

Between a new Water Treatment Plant and an eventual distribution system upgrade, the Town should realize an overall improvement in water quality and flow.

***Responsibility:***

DPW

***Timing:***

2004 - for new Treatment plant

2006 – for distribution model

***Resources:***

DPW

**GOAL 4: Bring the Water Treatment Plant on line in compliance with all new DEP standards.**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Maximize sewerable area of Town.**

***Discussion:***

The Town is now undertaking the creation of a comprehensive wastewater management plan ordered by the DEP. Town Meeting has already appropriated the \$250,000 necessary to complete the plan.

***Action needed:***

- After wastewater management plan is complete, rank areas of Town needing upgrade in order of importance.
- Estimate amount of funds needed to complete as much work as possible on a yearly basis.
- Maximize funding by coordinating work to be done along with streets that need drainage and/or paving
- Develop a plan for septic tank pumping for those residents who will not be sewerred and must stay on septic.
- Estimate cost for such plan on a yearly basis.

***Expected results:***

Once waste water management plan is implemented the Town will have a better idea of how much sewerred the Town will need to do and how long it should take to finish. At that point the Town can develop a plan to aid those residents left with septic.

***Responsibility:***

DPW

***Timing:***

2003-2023

***Resources:***

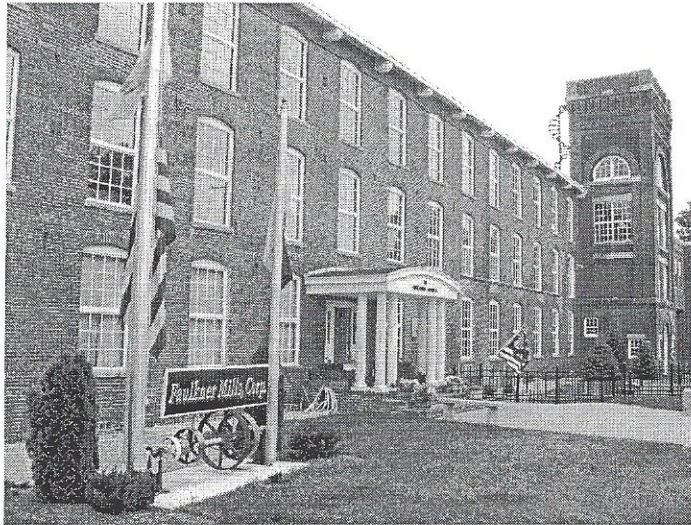
DPW



## *Chapter Eight: Natural and Cultural Resources*

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In 2005, Billerica will celebrate its 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a municipality of the Commonwealth. More than a dozen generations of Billericans have taken part in the formation of our character as a rural, industrial, and suburban community. We enter the new millennium as trustees of a rich and varied heritage that encompasses all four centuries of American history.



*Middlesex Canal Museum Visitors Center on Faulkner Street*

We stand at crossroads in the life of our community. The postwar explosion of population and development transformed Billerica from a small town of mills and farms into a sprawling suburb in one generation. We are in imminent danger of losing our identity within the anonymous conurbation of Greater Boston. It is therefore imperative that we should strive to preserve our colonial, early industrial, and rural past and protect as many acres of undisturbed river corridor, woodland, wetland, and upland landscapes. If we act now, we can still preserve our town's unique character.



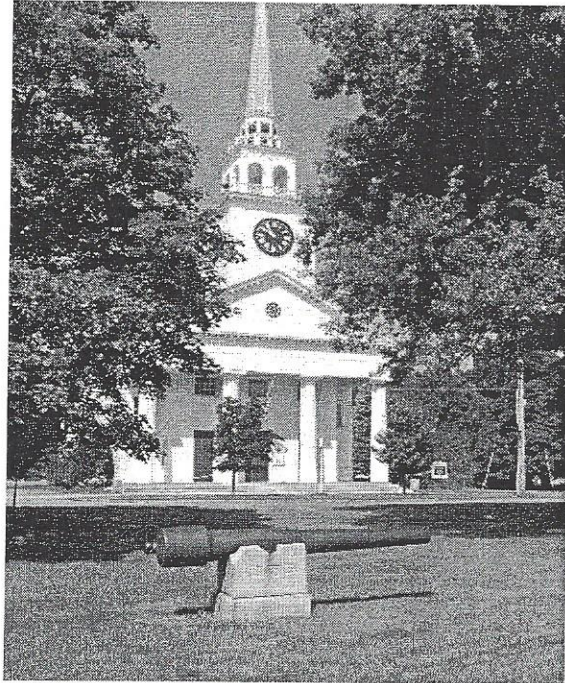
*The Clara E. Sexton House on Concord Road, Headquarters of the Billerica Historical Society*



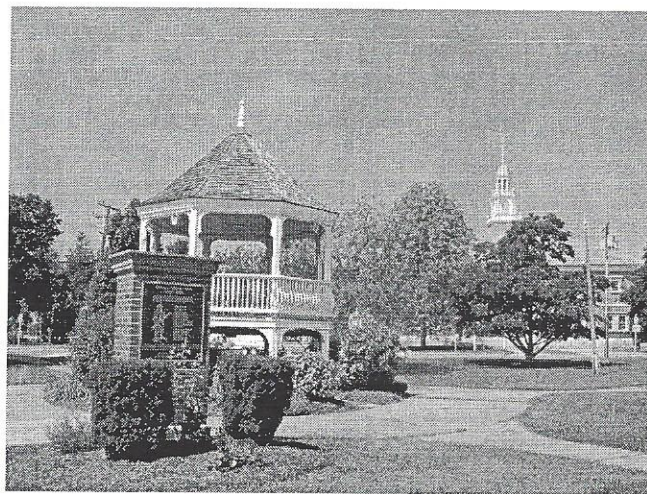
## *Issues and Concerns*

At the Planning Charrette held by Mullin Associates, Inc. on May 5, 2001, the participants raised the following issues that related to natural and cultural resources:

- Some of the strengths of the Town of Billerica are the historical memorials and buildings, the historic districts, the extensive natural resources, the open space, the Recreation Department that provides recreational opportunities for children, the golf course, the two rivers, and the state parks.



- Two of the weaknesses of the Town are inaccessibility of the Concord River and the lack of a bike path.
- The many opportunities for the Town of Billerica include purchasing open space, saving the Middlesex Canal, providing access to the rivers, capitalizing on the Vietnam Veterans Park, assessing the condition of wetlands, improving water resources, and extending the bike path through Billerica.



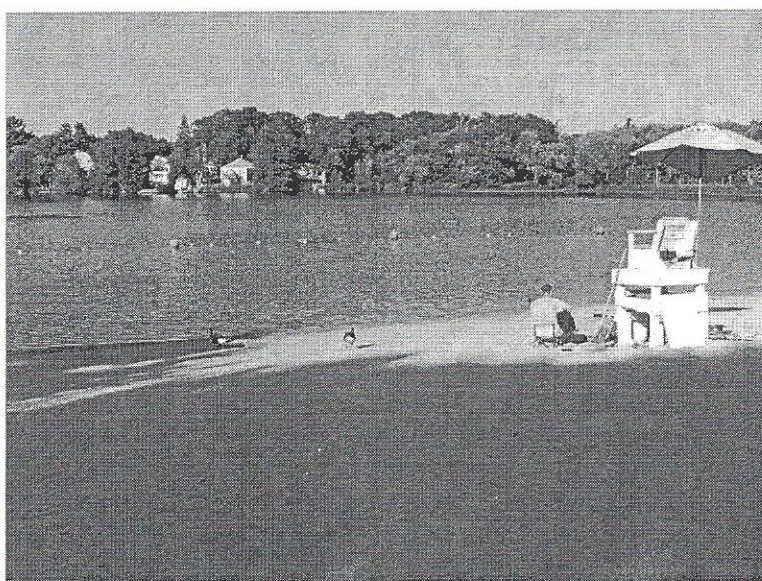
- The many preliminary actions that were proposed by participants include buying open space and preserving it, creating a community center, promoting the area's natural resources by offering boating, hiking, or mountain biking trips, providing public education on the Rivers Protection Act, controlling development by



prioritizing parcels of land and funding the land bank, creating more recreational areas in West Billerica, building canoe launches on the Concord River, and improving access to the rivers.

- The critical first steps for the Town that were proposed by the participants include preserving (and buying) open space, using a land bank account to purchase open space, and taking a fiscal approach to preserving open space.

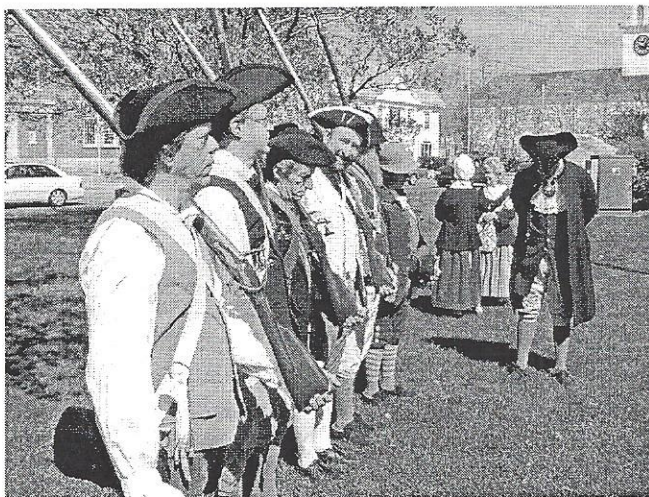
The Charrette was followed by a Community Survey that was conducted in September 2001, which included questions about natural and cultural resources. According to the Community Survey Summary Report by the Billerica Long Range Master Planning Committee, respondents supported preserving or protecting open space. The majority of the respondents felt it was important for Billerica to preserve open space, protect its air/water quality, to protect its forests/wildlife/fish resources, and to preserve the rural elements of the Town. The recreational activities that were most important to respondents were bicycling, playground/tot lots and walking while ATV/snowmobiling, radio control airplanes and camping were viewed as the least important.



## Goals and Objectives

In an effort to preserve the character of the Town of Billerica, the Natural & Cultural Resources Sub-Committee developed the following goals and objectives:

### Goal 1: Foster local environmental, historical and cultural literacy in Billerica



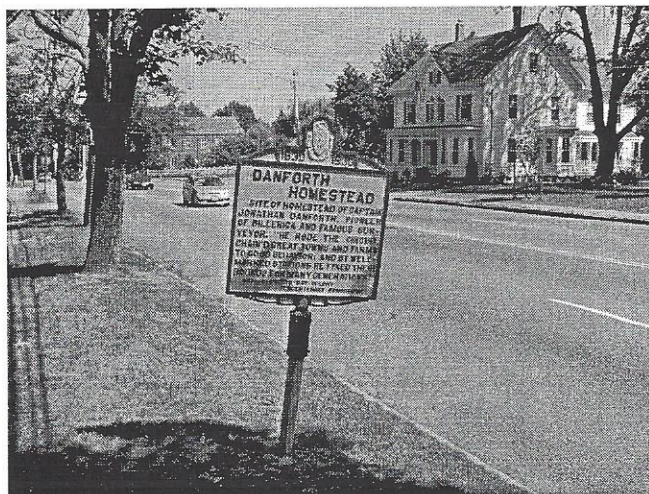
Objective A: Work with the public school system to ensure inclusion of environmental, historical and cultural programs, information and activities into the curriculum.

Objective B: Utilize all available media to provide information on the environment, historic and cultural resources of our community.

Objective C: Establish a visitor center.

Objective D: Update and distribute Billerica's Natural Treasures Booklet.

### Goal 2: Preserve, restore and protect our town's historical, cultural and natural resources



Objective A: Complete an inventory of all historic places, homes, monuments and markers.

Objective B: Organize a process for the preservation of historic collections.



Goal 3: Identify, recognize and promote Billerica's unique character

- Objective A: Consider and protect community character in all aspects of municipal management and planning.
- Objective B: Enhance the cultural opportunities and resources available to the citizens of Billerica.
- Objective C: Protect the natural and historic character of the physical environment through planning and development guidelines/regulations
- Objective D: Develop and market Billerica as a desirable place to live, work, play and visit.

## *Implementation Strategies*

### **GOAL 1: Foster local environmental, historical and cultural literacy in Billerica**

#### **OBJECTIVE A:**

**Work with the public school system to ensure that environmental, historical and cultural programs, information and activities are included in the curriculum.**

#### ***Discussion:***

Increased understanding and knowledge of the historic, cultural and natural resources of our community and the importance of protecting and preserving them. When an historic house is destroyed or an historic property is developed, a part of Billerica's history is gone forever.

#### ***Action Needed:***

- Department Heads should review curriculum with teachers and determine what is currently included and identify areas where improvements can be made
- Department Heads and teachers should meet with community groups and leaders to identify programs, people and resources to assist with curriculum development
- Develop enrichment programs for further study of subjects
- Apply for grants to assist with funding for new curriculum development, cultural presentations, and visiting artists

#### ***Expected Results:***

As our youth begin to understand the direct correlation between their actions and their effect on the environment, they will act to conserve natural resources, protect wildlife habitat and protect the earth's environment. Through increased exposure to the arts, youth will have a greater appreciation and understanding of the arts. Billerica has over 400 years of American history that can be utilized in the curriculum to make history come alive for our youth.

#### ***Responsibility:***

Department Heads, Teachers

#### ***Timing:***

2003-2007

#### ***Resources:***

Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, local and state Historical Commission, Historical Society, local and state Cultural Commissions, Education and Schools Subcommittee, Town Manager, Conservation Commission, Recreation Department, Department of Veteran's Services, School Committee, School Administration, Massachusetts Board of Education, School Department, PTO's, School Committee, Public Library, Arts Council, Non-profit conservation and arts groups (National Wildlife Federation, CREST, Atlantis Playmakers, etc.), Middlesex Canal Association, Professional Organizations, State & Federal agencies

**GOAL 1: Foster local environmental, historical and cultural literacy in Billerica**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Utilize all available media to provide information on the environmental, historical and cultural resources of our community.**

***Discussion:***

The Town should determine the means and methods it will use to increase awareness of Billerica's valuable environmental, historical and cultural resources.

***Action Needed:***

- Identify information that should be shared with the public and who or what agency/department/organization will compile the information
- Develop a listing of media outlets in Billerica
- Determine if and/or how the Library and the School Department currently incorporate information about local environmental, historic and cultural resources into their programs and curriculum
- Meet with the local reporters on a regular basis and feed stories about the resources to them
- Encourage monthly articles in the local paper that focus on Billerica's resources
- BATV should produce programs dedicated to preserving, protecting and promoting Billerica's natural, historical, and cultural resources. (Example – Creating oral histories of Billerica through conversations with individuals who have deep roots in Billerica, i.e., Gill Griggs, Marion Potter, Margaret Ingraham, Mary Pacheo, Charles Sterns, etc.)
- Develop informational material (brochures, maps, calendars, books, etc..) about local resources and distribute throughout the community

***Expected Results:***

Information about the local resources will be distributed in a variety of formats throughout the community. If quality informational materials are distributed on a regular basis, people will begin to rely on them for their benefit and education.

***Responsibility:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Recreation Department, Historical Commission, Public Library and Conservation Commission

***Timing:***

2003-2007

***Resources:***

Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Historical Commission, Historical Society, Cemetery Commission, Recreation Department, School Department, Public Library, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Director of Planning, the Town Manager, BATV, Newspapers, Town Web Page, Museum Committee, Public Schools, Historical Society, Middlesex Canal Association, Billerica Plan, Chamber of Commerce, Civic groups, Board of Selectmen and Citizens of Billerica



**GOAL 1: Foster local environmental, historical and cultural literacy in Billerica**

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Establish a visitor center**

***Discussion:***

Billerica currently has no central location for the distribution of information for visitors to our community. A visitor center would welcome guests to our community and provide information about places to visit, things to do and special events.

***Action Needed:***

- Identify and develop a visitor center in Billerica
- Contact other visitor centers to identify how they operate, how they are managed, how they are funded and the type of resources and materials they provided for visitors
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce, Billerica Plan, Regional and State Tourist Bureaus to distribute information about Billerica
- Place destination location signs on major highways and roads into Town.

***Expected Results:***

The Town of Billerica will have a visitor center open in time to celebrate Billerica's 350<sup>th</sup> birthday. Visitors, businesses and residents will have a central location for acquiring and sharing information about Billerica.

***Responsibility:***

Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Chamber of Commerce and Billerica Plan, Board of Selectmen

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, Chamber of Commerce, Internet, Conservation Commission, Recreation Department, Recreation Commission, Historical Commission, Historical Society, Cultural Commission, Public Library, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Tourist Bureau, NMCOG, Civic/Fraternal/Cultural organizations, Middlesex Canal Association, Museum Committee, Bennett Library and Cultural Center - Board of Directors, Planning Board and Director of Planning

**GOAL 1: Foster local environmental, historical and cultural literacy in Billerica**

**OBJECTIVE D:**

**Update and distribute Billerica's Natural Treasures Booklet**

***Discussion:***

Billerica's Natural Treasures booklet was created in the 1980s and needs to be up dated. With the completion of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, new information was identified that should be included in the booklet. While the booklet currently includes natural and recreation resources, historical information should be included. A completed booklet would serve as an excellent resource for our community. The booklet could be printed and the information could be placed on the Town's web page.

***Action Needed:***

- Update current information in Billerica's Natural Treasures Booklet
- Print and distribute booklet
- Post on Town's web page

***Expected Results:***

A printed Billerica's Natural Treasures booklet that is complete with current information.

***Responsibility:***

Recreation Department, Conservation Department, Historical Commission, Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003 - 2004

***Resources:***

Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Historical Society, Middlesex Canal Commission, SWEAT, CREST, SUASCO, Civic/Youth/Fraternal Organizations, Planning Board and Director of Planning, Historical Commission

**GOAL 2: Preserve, restore and protect our Town's historical, cultural and natural resources**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Complete and publish an inventory of all historic places, houses, monuments and markers**

***Discussion:***

The Town of Billerica has many historic sites that have not been properly inventoried. Creating a permanent record can help guide preservation and education plans.

***Action Needed:***

- Update current inventory list to include written information, location(s), photograph(s), designs/floor plans and other information of historic significance
- For historic places that are not currently on the state's list, submit information for consideration by the Massachusetts Historical Commission
- Publish an inventory in the Billerica's Natural Treasures Booklet, on the Town's Web Page, and with the Billerica & Massachusetts Historical Commission
- Establish policies, procedures and guidelines for Town signs and markers
- Place markers and signs on/at all sites

***Expected Results:***

The Town will have a permanent record of all historic places, buildings, monuments and markers.

***Responsibility:***

Historical Commission

***Timing:***

2003 - 2004

***Resources:***

Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Historical Commission, Historical Society, volunteers, student interns, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Planning Board and Director of Planning, Public Library, University of Lowell, Billerica Colonial Minutemen, Middlesex Canal, National Park Service, Museum Commission, Community Organizations, Citizens



**GOAL 2: Preserve, restore and protect our Town's historical, cultural and natural resources**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Organize a process for the preservation of historic collections and information**

***Discussion:***

Every day Billerica is losing many of its historic treasures. Photographs are being destroyed. Family histories and stories of life in Billerica are not being recorded. Artifacts are being sold. Historic collections are being broken up. Books and letters are not preserved. A system or protocol for collecting and preserving Billerica's historic resources is needed.

***Action Needed:***

- Working with historical societies, museum committees, public libraries and universities, develop programs to ensure the preservation of historic collections and information. (Example: Citizens bring photographs or other historic material to the Library where volunteers copy and record the information, volunteers record/video tape family stories, etc.)
- Encourage donations from Billerica's past for inclusion in the Town's Museum and Library collections
- Establish monthly historic displays at the Public Library, Visitor Center, Middlesex Canal Museum and Visitor Center, and Billerica Museum. (loan, permanent, or traveling)

***Expected Results:***

Preserving Billerica's history through the preservation of historic artifacts will enhance our citizens' understanding of the value of our history.

***Responsibility:***

Historical Commission, Middlesex Canal Commission, Museum Committee, Public Library

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Historical Commission, Middlesex Canal Commission, Billerica Colonial Minutemen, Museum Committee, Public Library, Howe Alumni Association, Billerica Athletic Association, Youth and Civic Groups, BATV, University of Lowell, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Historical Society

### **GOAL 3: Identify, recognize and promote Billerica's unique character**

#### **OBJECTIVE A:**

**Consider and protect community character in all aspects of municipal management and planning**

#### ***Discussion:***

The nature and character of our community has seen many changes throughout history. Billerica, which began as a farming community and played major roles in America's war of Independence and Industrial Revolution, became a vacation destination a century ago. Growth in Billerica exploded in the 1960's and 1970's, when many families left the cities for the suburbs.

With the Town's 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary at hand, the time has come to identify and promote "Billerica's Character". Many residents have a vision of Billerica and it's relationship to local history, culture and the environment; a vision that may be in conflict with past and current Town policies. The Billerica business community has to become a stakeholder in Billerica's vision as well, because they too will benefit from this common vision.

#### ***Action Needed:***

- Review all Town, State and Federal laws, policies and procedures to insure best management practices for our community that preserve Billerica's character
- Develop unified architectural standards that are applied to new and renovated structures, roadways, signs and landscapes
- Conduct joint meetings of Boards and Commissions as needed to insure implementation of standards and when dealing with projects where multiple boards, commissions and/or department will be involved
- Conduct workshops, trainings and seminars for Boards, Commissions and Town Departments
- Contact the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and inquire about the latest zoning bylaws related to enhancing and protecting community character
- Planning Board and the Director of Planning shall develop applicable by law to be reviewed by Town Counsel addressing legal aspects

#### ***Expected Results:***

Billerica's unique character will be preserved.

#### ***Responsibility:***

Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee

#### ***Timing:***

2003 - 2007

#### ***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Town Manager, Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Town Boards and Commissions, Town Departments, NMCOG, MMA, Chamber of Commerce, Billerica Plan, Legal Counsel

**GOAL 3: Identify, recognize and promote Billerica's unique character**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Enhance the cultural opportunities and resources available to the citizens of Billerica**

***Discussion:***

Our community has developed and promoted a diversity of sports programs and leagues for our residents. The Town has dedicated funds for the development, reconstruction and maintenance of athletic fields and facilities over the years. Many youth sports organizations have also contributed to the development and maintenance of athletic fields. We must continue to fund and manage our athletic fields and facilities.

Cultural opportunities for our citizen remain limited, primarily due to a lack of program space. The public schools offer great potential, but have been underutilized by Town departments and community groups due to facility charges.

As a community we must develop and support a diversity of programs, resources and opportunities for our citizens.

***Action Needed:***

- Determine what cultural opportunities and resources are currently available
- Determine what cultural opportunities and resources should be available
- Research grant and funding options in order to offer additional cultural programs, develop facilities and resources, and provide cultural opportunities
- Establish a Community Center that will serve as the focal point for cultural programs and events, education and recreation
- Develop and promote Art, Music, Theater, Dance and other cultural programs (educational opportunities, performances and shows)

***Expected Results:***

These actions will result in the development of a vibrant Community Center that meets the need of Billerica's citizens. The Center would be designed to meet the current and future needs of the community. It would offer new and exciting leisure opportunities for all ages, abilities, and interests.

***Responsibility:***

Recreation Department, Billerica Arts Council, Billerica Public Library, Billerica Public Schools, Businesses

***Timing:***

2003 - 2006

***Resources:***

Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, Youth, Civic/Fraternal/Non-profit groups, professional organizations, Billerica Arts Council, Billerica Plan, Chamber of Commerce, Business community, Citizens



**GOAL 3: Identify, recognize and promote Billerica's unique character**

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Through planning and development guidelines, conserve the natural and historic character of the physical environment**

***Discussion:***

At various times in Billerica's history, we have seen periods of rapid economic growth and land development. This unplanned growth has been detrimental to the forests, fields, rivers, and lakes that give our community its special character. Our citizens have identified preservation and protection of our physical environment as a critical issue. Open space acquisition opportunities are becoming very scarce and the Town must identify and plan for protection of key parcels of land. The Town needs to identify a management plan for properties that it currently owns to ensure they are utilized and protected in the most appropriate manner.

***Action Needed:***

- Maintain a current inventory of historic assets (historic downtown buildings, historic homes, etc.) and environmental assets (scenic country roads, protected open space, etc.) in Billerica
- Complete an inventory of the location and status of plant and animal species and habitats
- Develop and implement habitat preservation plans
- Identify key parcels of land for purchase or protection
- Develop a computerized listing of natural resources, open space, parks, historic resources, and scenic resources
- Review zoning bylaw, subdivision control regulations, and local bylaws for ways in which the natural and historic character of the physical environment is protected (demolition delay bylaw, required Historical Commission review of certain development projects, scenic roads regulations, etc.)
- Develop management plans for all sites currently under the control of the Town
- Develop guidelines that help to conserve the natural environment and historic character of Billerica
- Explore Billerica's eligibility for state and federal Natural or Historic Designation Programs. Initiate discussion with the National Park Service regarding inclusion of the Middlesex Canal in the National Park System
- Increase public awareness and appreciation of Billerica's natural resources
- Ensure that all significant natural resources (natural habitats, forest resources, water resources, geological resources and agricultural lands) are adequately protected

***Expected Results:***

Research has identified a strong tie between the quality of the environment and our quality of life. As population and development pressures increase, we must make good management decisions for our community. We must take actions that protect and preserve open space, natural resources, historical and ecological resources, scenic and recreational resources, and cultural resources.

***Responsibility:***

Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Director of Planning

***Timing:***

2003 - 2007

***Resources:***

Planning Board and Director of Planning, Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Legal Counsel, Historical Commission, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting, Boards and Commissions, Town Departments, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, National Park Service, non-profit organizations, local environmental and watershed organizations.

**GOAL 3: Identify, recognize and promote Billerica's unique character**

**OBJECTIVE D:**

**Develop and market Billerica as a desirable place to live, work, play and visit**

***Discussion:***

As we know by example from our neighboring communities (Lexington, Bedford, Concord, Lowell, Salem, and others) - history, culture, recreation and preservation of natural resources are economic assets. Tourism is a critical component of the present and future economy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is important for Billerica to exploit these opportunities by protecting, enhancing and promoting the historic, cultural, natural and recreational amenities of our community.

***Action Needed:***

- Develop a Town logo/motto that captures the character of our community. (Example: Billerica .... The Yankee Doodle Town)
- Improve public awareness of recreation, park, historic and cultural resources through establishment of a signage program that incorporates unified graphics standards, materials, and language
- Create marketable products and information that promotes our community

***Expected Results:***

Create a marketing and public relations package that promotes Billerica as a great place to live, work, play and visit.

***Responsibility:***

Billerica Plan, Long Range Master Plan Oversight Committee

***Timing:***

2003 - 2005

***Resources:***

Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Volunteers, Chamber of Commerce, Planning Board and Director of Planning, Economic Development Subcommittee, Housing Subcommittee, Town Departments, Commissions and Boards, Civic/Fraternal/Youth Organizations, Massachusetts Department of Tourism, Billerica Plan, Business Community, and Citizens



## *Chapter Nine: Open Space and Recreation*

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The 2001 Billerica Open Space and Recreation Plan Update builds on the comprehensive 1996 Plan and the Town's substantial progress towards and accomplishment of many of the goals of the 1996 Plan. The 2001 Update was prepared by the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee representing town boards and interested citizens, with technical assistance, writing and GIS maps by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG). Resident preferences were solicited through a survey, an interactive public meeting, and presentation of the draft plan at a second public meeting. The 2001 Plan Update focuses on six goals:

1. Environmentally healthy water and wetland resources.
2. Preservation of key open space, cultural and historic resources
3. Improved public awareness and access to open space and recreation land
4. Land management and maintenance systems for open space and recreation facilities
5. Greenways for recreational trails and habitat networks, creating local and regional links
6. Balanced uses of open space to include conservation, passive recreation, and active recreation



### *Issues and Concerns*

The Town of Billerica currently has over 400 acres of state forest and over 800 acres of municipal protected open space. Unprotected properties separate many of these open space parcels. This lack of linkages in addition to the lack of public awareness of the Town's open space resources, and lack of public access to the Concord River and other water resources are the main issues related to open space that Billerica faces.

At the Planning Charrette held by Mullin Associates, Inc. on May 5, 2001, the participants raised the following issues that related to open space:

- Some of the strengths of the Town of Billerica are the extensive natural resources, the open space, the two rivers, and the state parks.
- The many opportunities for the Town of Billerica include purchasing open space, saving the Middlesex Canal, and providing access to the rivers.
- The many preliminary actions that were proposed by participants include buying open space and preserving it, controlling development by prioritizing parcels of land and funding the land bank, and creating more recreational areas in West Billerica.



- The critical first steps for the Town that were proposed by the participants include preserving (and buying) open space, using a land bank account to purchase open space, and taking a fiscal approach to preserving open space.

The Charrette was followed by a Community Survey that was conducted in September 2001, which included questions about open space. According to the Community Survey Summary Report by the Billerica Long Range Master Planning Committee, respondents supported preserving or protecting open space. The majority of the respondents felt it was important for Billerica to preserve open space, protect its air/water quality, to protect its forests/wildlife/fish resources, and to preserve the rural elements of the Town. The recreational activities that were most important to respondents were bicycling, playground/tot lots and walking while ATV/snowmobiling, radio control airplanes and camping were viewed as the least important.



## *Goals and Objectives*

The following goals and objectives related to open space in Billerica are found in the 5-Year Action Plan section of the 2001 Town of Billerica Open Space & Recreation Plan Update (Draft):

Goal 1: Environmentally healthy water and wetland resources

Objective A: Protect and enhance wildlife habitat and water resources



Goal 2: Preservation of key open space, cultural and historic resources

Objective A: Protect open space adjacent to or connecting with existing protected areas

Objective B: Protect remaining large parcels, scenic and cultural landscapes and land for future municipal use, such as cemeteries, future schools and recreation

Goal 3: Improved public awareness and access to open space and recreation land

Objective A: Multi-media public access and information on open space resources

Objective B: Parking and access to state forest and other open space lands

Goal 4: Land management and maintenance system for open space and recreation facilities

Objective A: Expand and implement stewardship plans for conservation land

Objective B: Control of litter, dumping, and vehicle damage to public open space

Objective C: Enhanced and consistent funding and staffing for management and maintenance

Objective D: Enhanced partnerships with private organizations

Goal 5: Greenways for recreational trails and habitat networks creating local and regional links

Objective A: Link existing, fragmented open space resources and link with regional trails



Goal 6: Balanced uses of open space to include conservation, passive recreation, and active recreation

Objective A: Create more neighborhood and youth recreation facilities

## *Implementation Strategies*

### *GOAL 1: Environmentally healthy water and wetland resources*

#### *OBJECTIVE A:*

##### **Protect and enhance wildlife habitat and water resources**

#### *Discussion:*

Protecting open space along waterways from future development is one way to provide healthy water and wetland resources for the citizens of Billerica. There are many ways to create this protected open space. The Town should explore ways in which it can either purchase properties along rivers and ponds or protect properties adjacent to waterbodies that it currently owns.

#### *Action Needed:*

- Identify and prioritize potential sites along rivers and ponds and advocate for public acquisition of open space
- Transfer undevelopable tax title properties to the appropriate board or commission in coordination with open space priorities

#### *Expected Results:*

The Town will identify and protect properties (both privately owned and those in tax-title) adjacent to water resources.

#### *Responsibility:*

Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Recreation Department

#### *Timing:*

2002 - 2006

#### *Resources:*

Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Recreation Department, Assessors Department, Finance Department/Tax Collector

**GOAL 2: Preservation of key open space, cultural and historic resources**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Protect open space adjacent to or connecting with existing protected areas**

***Discussion:***

The creation of open space networks or greenways is important for the successful development of many animal and plant species. Once greenways are in place, residents and visitors can utilize them for passive recreation uses and wildlife can use them as corridors. To start the process for creating a greenway, the Town of Billerica should identify the properties that are presently protected and then look for adjacent parcels that would serve to link the protected properties in a network. Once the adjacent parcels are identified, the Town should actively pursue protecting them from future development.

***Action Needed:***

- Seek protection, both public and private nonprofit, of open space parcels adjacent to existing protected areas or linking resources

***Expected Results:***

Once identified, parcels adjacent to existing protected land will be protected from future development.

***Responsibility:***

Open Space Committee, non-profit organizations

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Open Space Committee, non-profit organizations, Assessors Department



**GOAL 2: Preservation of key open space, cultural and historic resources**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Protect remaining large parcels, scenic and cultural landscapes and land for future municipal use, such as cemeteries, future schools and recreation**

***Discussion:***

Towns should make every effort to protect existing large parcels of land as well as scenic and cultural landscapes. Once these valuable resources are developed or destroyed, they cannot be replaced. The Town of Billerica should work with the local citizens and property owners to educate them as to the importance of protecting properties of substantial size and landscapes that the Town associates with its unique community character.

***Action Needed:***

- Discuss open space preservation with property owners, including conservation easements, purchase of development rights, limited development projects etc., through a series of group meetings
- Improve cluster zoning options for enhanced open space provision
- Establish an Open Space zoning category for publicly owned open space
- Consider Town acquisition of critical open space land, when other techniques are not possible.
- Continue Beautification Committee inventory of roadside trees and woods and seek Tree City designation
- Incorporate landscape standards in zoning and subdivision regulations to minimize lot clearing to protect roadside trees and enhance infiltration of stormwater (contact Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for ideas)
- Identify and designate additional scenic roads
- Identify potential parcels for future municipal use

***Expected Results:***

The Town will make efforts to protect scenic and cultural landscapes and large parcels from development through a variety of measures.

***Responsibility:***

Open Space Committee with assistance of environmental groups, Planning Board, Town Meeting, Beautification Committee

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Open Space Committee, local environmental groups, Planning Board, Town Meeting, Beautification Committee, Planning Board and Director of Planning, Legal Counsel, local property owners, Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development

**GOAL 3: Improved public awareness and access to open space and recreation land**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Multi-media public access and information on open space resources**

***Discussion:***

Appropriate publicity concerning local open space resources is a great way to improve public awareness of the Town's inventory of protected open space and recreation properties. Much of the information describing municipal properties is easy to obtain and transform into marketing materials. The Town of Billerica should consult with other communities regarding the maps and pamphlets that they offer in order to get some ideas for developing such materials locally.

***Action Needed:***

- Create a map and directory of Billerica public open space for the Town web site and in printed form, building on 1997 brochure
- Identify a school contact to help create school programs on Billerica natural and cultural resources
- Continue installing signage to identify open space resources

***Expected Results:***

Local open space resources will be marketed better resulting in an increase in the number of visitors to the sites.

***Responsibility:***

Open Space Committee, Town webmaster, School Department, Conservation Commission, Recreation Department

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Open Space Committee, Town webmaster, School Department, Conservation Commission, Recreation Department, Internet, local environmental groups, Natural and Cultural Resources Subcommittee

**GOAL 3: Improved public awareness and access to open space and recreation land**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Parking and access to state forest and other open space lands**

***Discussion:***

In order to encourage the public's use of protected open space, the Town and the State must provide adequate points of access and available parking. Parking is a necessary accessory use at open space parcels that should not adversely affect the beauty of the natural resource. The Town of Billerica should make every effort to plan for the appropriate number of parking spaces and for the proper placement of and materials for the parking areas. Access points should be clearly defined and appropriate for the intended use.

***Action Needed:***

- Continue work to create small parking areas for access to Town-owned open space lands
- Continue work with DEM to create small parking areas, signage and trails at state parks

***Expected Results:***

The parking facilities and the access points at the state forest and other protected open space will be improved and maintained so as to maximize the public's use of those sites.

***Responsibility:***

Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Open Space Commission

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Open Space Commission, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, local environmental groups



**GOAL 4: Land management and maintenance system for open space and recreation facilities**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Expand and implement stewardship plans for conservation land**

***Discussion:***

Planning for the long-term management of conservation land is often overlooked unless it is required by a funding source. For instance, the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services requires communities to submit land use management plans as part of its Self-Help grant program that distributes funding to communities to assist in the purchase and protection of open space. However, communities like Billerica can benefit from developing and implementing stewardship plans for local conservation land. These plans identify resources and consistent methods and actions that will be implemented to ensure future protection of significant natural resources.

***Action Needed:***

- Implement Jones Forest Stewardship Plan
- Begin forest stewardship plans for Fox Hill and Dudley Park

***Expected Results:***

Stewardship plans will be developed and implemented for local conservation land.

***Responsibility:***

Conservation Commission

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Conservation Commission, Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services, local environmental preservation groups

**GOAL 4: Land management and maintenance system for open space and recreation facilities**

**OBJECTIVE B:**

**Control of litter, dumping, and vehicle damage to public open space**

***Discussion:***

In order to encourage people to use the Town's open space and to protect its investment in these natural resources, the Town of Billerica needs to ensure that the sites are protected from damage. Rules for use of the site should be developed and clearly displayed. The Town should make every effort to enforce the rules by working with the local police force.

***Action Needed:***

- Work with police to monitor and enforce dumping and vehicle damage in open space
- Review implementation of the non-criminal ticketing system for enforcement of open space rules and regulations and the levels of fines

***Expected Results:***

Instances of damage in local open spaces will be reduced in the Town.

***Responsibility:***

Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Police Department, State Environmental Police, Board of Selectmen

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Police Department, State Environmental Police, Board of Selectmen, Volunteers

**GOAL 4: Land management and maintenance system for open space and recreation facilities**

**OBJECTIVE C:**

**Enhanced and consistent funding and staffing for management and maintenance**

***Discussion:***

Funding for the management and maintenance of open space and recreation sites is often either an afterthought or an omission. In order to keep these properties in good working order, the Town of Billerica needs to develop management plans that specify necessary tasks and to ensure adequate levels of funding to support the work involved in those tasks.

***Action Needed:***

- Develop a stewardship program for conservation land
- Develop a Town forest management plan
- Require a use and maintenance plan to accompany all new open space and recreation acquisitions
- Require a maintenance plan to accompany sidewalk, bike lane, and bike and pedestrian plans
- Document existing maintenance and management gaps and problems
- Create a management and maintenance plan with incremental steps
- Seek funding of the plan from the own Board of Selectmen

***Expected Results:***

The Town of Billerica will develop management plans and funding strategies to support management and maintenance activities related to the Town's open space and recreation sites.

***Responsibility:***

Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Open Space Committee

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Board of Selectmen, Open Space Committee, Board of Selectmen, Volunteers, Local Environmental Groups



**GOAL 4: Land management and maintenance system for open space and recreation facilities**

**OBJECTIVE D:**

**Enhanced partnerships with private organizations**

***Discussion:***

The Town will not preserve the greatest amount of open space by acting alone. To maximize efforts to protect open space, the Town of Billerica would benefit from establishing cooperative efforts with local property owners, local environmental groups and local businesses to take advantage of the many different and creative ways to protect open space.

***Action Needed:***

- Develop partnerships to expand non-governmental support for protection of open space resources

***Expected Results:***

The Town will work in conjunction with the private sector to protect open space.

***Responsibility:***

Open Space Committee, Recreation Commission

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Open Space Committee, Recreation Commission, Local businesses, Environmental Groups, Local property owners

**GOAL 5:** *Greenways for recreational trails and habitat networks creating local and regional links*

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Link existing fragmented open space resources, including regional trails**

***Discussion:***

Greenways provide many animal species with habitat corridors and many people with opportunities for passive recreation uses. To maximize the use of the open space greenways in Billerica, the Town should work to create linkages with trail systems in other communities and on the regional level.

***Action Needed:***

- Continue acquisition of right of way for the Yankee Doodle Trail
- Develop trails linking SVT and Town land along the river with Lowell Heritage Park
- Work with MassHighway on concepts for Route 3 bike trail crossing
- Create a trails plan to link open space and natural resources
- Complete trail improvements in at least one Town-owned open space area within five years
- Engage volunteers in projects to create trail systems within Town-owned open space

***Expected Results:***

Fragmented open space properties and regional trails will be linked together.

***Responsibility:***

Board of Selectmen, Open Space Committee, Parks Department, Conservation Commission, Recreation Department

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Board of Selectmen, Open Space Committee, Parks Department, Conservation Commission, Recreation Department

**GOAL 6: Balanced uses of open space to include conservation, passive recreation, and active recreation**

**OBJECTIVE A:**

**Create more neighborhood and youth recreation facilities**

***Discussion:***

In order to be a well-rounded community, the Town of Billerica should offer its citizens a wide variety of recreational opportunities including small-scale recreation sites like skateboard parks and tot lots. In order to develop both of these types of recreation sites properly, the Town would do well to involve the local neighborhood residents and local skateboarders to participate in the early development stages.

***Action Needed:***

- Build a skateboard park in the Lampson Complex
- Continue inventory and identification of tax title parcels for suitability for neighborhood parks and tot lots and survey neighborhoods for interest in Town acquisition for this purpose

***Expected Results:***

Additional recreation facilities will be developed, by utilizing existing Town-owned land.

***Responsibility:***

Recreation Department, Open Space Committee

***Timing:***

2002 - 2006

***Resources:***

Recreation Department, Open Space Committee, Assessors Department, Finance Department/Tax Collector, local volunteers